

FINANCIAL TIMES

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the week
with...



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WORLD NEWS

EU awaits Gore concession on US greenhouse gas emissions

US vice-president Al Gore is expected to offer concessions in Kyoto, Japan, today to secure a deal on global warming. He is under pressure to reduce US greenhouse gas emission targets and be more flexible about developing countries. The European Union said it was up to Mr Gore to match a softer EU stance announced yesterday. Page 4

Antonov crash kills at least 62 Searchers in Irkutsk, Russia, expected to find more bodies as they sifted the wreckage of an apartment block hit by an Antonov transport aircraft. Page 4

Hong Kong flu scare Hong Kong health officials appealed for calm after a strain of influenza previously found only in birds claimed two more victims in the territory, bringing the death toll to three.

Israeli strike ends Israeli union officials ended a five-day strike which crippled public services. Strikers shut down government offices, the stock exchange, banks and the airport, in a dispute over pension rights, privatisation and economic reform. Page 4

Ulster tensions set to rise Tensions are expected to mount in the Northern Ireland talks this week when leaders of Sinn Fein, political wing of the Irish Republican Army, tell UK prime minister Tony Blair that the peace process must ultimately lead to a united Ireland. Page 6

Czech political turmoil Czech president Vaclav Havel will ask Christian Democratic party leader Josef Lux to try to form a new coalition government following last week's resignation of premier Vaclav Klaus.

Anglo-Argentine meeting British and Argentine defence ministers were due to meet in London today for the first time since the Falklands war of 1982.

Albright tours Africa US secretary of state Madeleine Albright is starting a trip to Africa that the US hopes will herald a new, more dynamic relationship with a continent often marginalised in policymaking.

NZ cabinet shifts to right Jenny Shipley, New Zealand's first woman prime minister, reshuffled the cabinet, promoting right wingers and rewarding supporters who backed her against ex-premier Jim Bolger. Page 4; Observer, Page 17

Police chief quits Philippine police chief Recaredo Sarmiento resigned amid public anger at recent kidnaps. Page 4

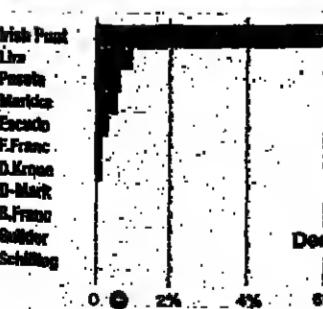
Skydiver ends in tragedy Three skydivers on an adventure trip plunged to their deaths at the South Pole when their parachutes failed to open, according to trip organiser Adventure Network International of Canada.

Traffic turns Two dogs skilled in sniffing out truffles were poisoned in a vicious war between the hunters of the fungi in Umbria, central Italy. Top quality truffles fetch about £2.5m (\$1,400) a kilo.

Chain store's new head British retailer Marks and Spencer has appointed a resident poet. Page 6

World Cup sabotage attempt Saboteurs tried to cut off electrical power at last week's televised World Cup soccer draw. Police were called in after workers discovered intruders had broken into a power transformer near the Velodrome stadium in Mar-selles, southern France.

EMS Grid



The Austrian, Dutch, Belgian and German currencies are now all within 0.02 per cent of their central rates in the exchange rate mechanism as the currencies expected to join European monetary union converge. Currencies, Page 27

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MONDAY DECEMBER 8 1997

Swiss merger set to create second largest bank in world

Combined SBC and UBS to have assets of nearly \$600bn

By Jane Martinson in London and William Hall in Zurich

Swiss Bank Corporation and Union Bank of Switzerland are expected to announce a full merger today in a deal that will create the world's second largest commercial bank with assets nearly \$600bn.

The new company, likely to be called United Bank of Switzerland, is also set to become the world's largest fund manager and private banking operation with assets under management of SFr1.300bn (\$915.4bn).

The new group will be valued at SFr85bn, based on Friday's closing share prices.

Considerable overlap in the European investment banking businesses of the two groups is expected to lead to 5,000-7,000 job cuts in the combined investment banking divisions, which employ between 18,000 and 20,000 people worldwide. London is expected to be hit hardest by job cuts.

In the domestic Swiss banking operations, cuts estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000 are likely to be phased in to satisfy domestic sensitivities.

The combined group will employ some 55,000 people worldwide before the cuts.

UBS is the biggest Swiss bank in terms of domestic retail banking with 2.6m customers, compared with Credit Suisse's 2.4m and Swiss Bank Corporation's 2.2m.

The big banks already face strong competition from the 24 canonical banks and new legislation means the Swiss postal savings bank is going to become a powerful competitor.

Nevertheless, UBS is determined to remain a strong player in the domestic Swiss market.

Swiss Bank Corporation, by contrast, has always been regarded as the least committed of the big three to Swiss retail banking and

has the least to lose by throwing its lot in with UBS.

UBS is also the Swiss market leader in private banking. The only area where UBS really lags behind SBC is merchant banking.

One company insider said UBS had decided to restructure its investment banking division after the \$36bn merger between Credit Suisse and Winterthur in August.

Several key appointments are understood to favour SBC board directors. Marcel Ospel, SBC's chief executive, is expected to become chief executive of the combined group while Mathias Cabialavetta, the UBS president, is to be group chairman.

Johannes de Gier, the head of SBC's investment banking division, is to take control of the group's combined investment banking operations.

Gary Brinson, who joined SBC when the group took over his Chicago-based asset management company two years ago, is to take charge of the asset management operations, which include PDMF, one of the UK's largest pension fund managers.

Hugh Bogin, the head of SBC's private banking, is to head the combined groups' private banking operations.

The extent of the overlap, particularly in equities and corporate finance, has prompted speculation that part of UBS's business will be sold.

The deal, which has to be put to shareholders in February or March, will form a new company through a straight share swap, with UBS shareholders offered about 60 per cent of the new company.

Any deal between the two would have to win clearance from the Swiss and European competition authorities.

\$600bn question, Page 17
Lex, Page 18

Big companies may face \$50bn Emu cost

By Wolfgang Münchau,
In London

European economic and monetary union will impose transition costs of more than \$50bn on Europe's largest companies, an average of around \$30m per company, according to a survey published today.

The data support anecdotal evidence from individual companies that the costs for Emu preparations far exceed their earlier predictions.

The survey, commissioned by KPMG Management Consulting, was conducted by Harris, the opinion research group, during September and October. About

300 of Europe's largest companies took part.

The estimate of preparation costs was based on an extrapolation of the survey data to European companies with more than 5,000 employees.

The estimate seems consistent with other industry forecasts which put the total cost of preparing for Emu worldwide at around \$150bn. Some experts say the final bill may turn out to be even higher.

The KPMG survey found that Europe's top companies expected average prices to fall and average wages to rise under Emu, as

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FINANCIAL SERVICES

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Tehran plays host to Islamic summit



Workers adjust a banner in a Tehran marketplace welcoming delegates to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit. Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, will tomorrow open the meeting, expected to have representatives from more than 80 countries. Entry points closed. Page 4

S Korean shipbuilding conglomerate collapses

By John Burton in Seoul

South Korea's 12th-largest conglomerate, the Halla shipbuilding group, collapsed at the weekend after its creditor banks

curtailed loans and forced it to default on debt payments.

More highly leveraged conglomerates are expected to follow Halla after the government suspended the operations last week of nine of Korea's 30 investment banks, a vital source of short-term corporate financing.

Cory Securities last Friday became the first Korean brokerage house to go bust in 35 years after its investment bank subsidiary was included among those suspended.

The suspension has discouraged commercial banks from extending new loans to the investment banks. This is exacerbating a credit crunch as the indebted banks respond by refusing to roll over loans to highly leveraged industrial groups.

The government said it would try to rescue the investment banks through restructuring programmes and prevent more corporate bankruptcies. But this effort faces huge obstacles, given the perilous financial state

of most investment banks.

The government is also resisting pressure from the International Monetary Fund to close at least two insolvent commercial banks soon because of fears that this would trigger a run on bank deposits and further restrict corporate lending.

Halla amassed debts of at least \$6bn as it completed the construction last year of a new shipyard which has yet to produce its first finished vessel. Halla also invested heavily in building overseas cement plants and expanding car-component facilities.

However, the outlook for other Korean shipbuilders is improving, since the weak Korean currency is likely to boost ship orders.

"Halla expanded itself into bankruptcy," said Peter Bartholomew, managing director for Industrial Research and Consulting in Seoul.

Halla was established by the brother of the founder of Hyundai and has received financial support from Korea's leading conglomerate. But Hyundai said

it had no intention of taking over Halla subsidiaries, including its shipbuilding and car-component operations that would complement Hyundai's own.

Some analysts believe that Hyundai may yet be forced to acquire Halla's Mando Machinery, Korea's largest car-parts maker, since its bankruptcy could threaten production for all of the nation's carmakers.

The credit crunch is forcing other conglomerates to reduce investments. The Dongbu group said it was postponing plans to produce semiconductors in a \$2bn venture with International Business Machines of the US.

Conglomerates are also diverting funds from investments as they prepare to defend against possible takeover attempts by foreign companies. The government is raising the foreign shareholding ceiling in listed companies to 50 per cent.

South Korea's debt to major international banks rose by 7.4 per cent to \$16.8bn by mid-1997 from the end of 1996, according to figures released yesterday by the Bank for International Settlements.

Painful prospect, Page 16

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NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

European ministers to discuss consolation prizes for disappointed candidates for membership

EU may mollify rejected applicants

By Lionel Barber in Brussels

The European Union is moving toward a compromise over enlargement aimed at avoiding a new Iron Curtain in central and eastern Europe between disappointed candidates and those on a fast-track for EU membership.

EU foreign ministers will today discuss a package to smooth the path to an agreement at this week's European summit in Luxembourg.

Separately, the EU wants to reassure Turkey that its application for membership

is being taken seriously.

The Luxembourg summit is expected to endorse the European Commission's judgment that the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus and Malta are ready to open negotiations on entry into the EU, most likely starting in late March.

However, the enlargement debate has shifted sharply toward compensating those left behind: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. In particular, the Danes and Swedes have argued strongly against dividing the Baltic states

between Estonia, the front-runner, and Latvia and Lithuania.

A Danish proposal is gaining ground among all countries, with the possible exception of Slovakia, which should be included in the first phase of accession negotiations. This is known as the "screening phase" when the Commission and the member states scrutinise how far candidates comply with the "acquis communautaire", the obligations of membership including compliance with the single market.

Commission officials claim that the Danish proposal could slow down the enlargement negotiations by at least 12 months. "It is a transparent ploy to play the two Baltic states catch up with the front-runners," said a Commission official. "It is a de facto postponement of the negotiations."

Last week, Hans van den Broek, EU commissioner responsible for enlargement, raised the possibility of a "top-up fund" for the five outsiders in a bid to deflect charges that they had been short-changed on future financial aid.

A new study by the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London on enlargement estimates that the five front-runners stand to receive more than £100m (\$1,000) per head between 1999 and 2006. But the five back-markers are likely to receive under £100m per head. "This funding gap seriously questions the EU's commitment to solidarity and convergence," it says.

Commission officials warn that if special measures are offered to the excluded central and eastern Europeans, it will be even more difficult to convince Turkey that it is being treated on an equal

footing. EU leaders appear to be ready to declare at the summit that Turkey is eligible for membership – an unprecedented step.

Provided Greece drops its veto, EU leaders will also invite Turkey to a pan-European conference next year alongside all 15 members, the 10 east European applicants, and Cyprus. But Turkey will not be included in the "accession partnerships" for the eastern applicants which will offer financial aid and a road map to membership.

Enlargement questions answered, Page 10

Hopes for opening up EU gas market

By Neil Buckley in Brussels

European Union energy ministers will renew attempts today to agree on plans to open up parts of the EU's \$100bn-a-year natural gas market to competition. An accord is potentially in sight.

EU states' officials and the European Commission suggest that, for the first time since talks began in the late 1980s, a compromise is on the table which may prove acceptable to the main countries, notably France, Ger-

many and the UK.

The plan would lead to a minimum of about a quarter of the gas market in each EU state, accounted for by big industrial gas consumers and gas-fired electricity generators, being opened to competition initially. This would rise to a minimum of a third after 10 years.

France's energy minister, Christian Pierret, rejected a similar plan at the last ministers' meeting in October as too ambitious, could hold the key to agreement. France has sternly

opposed liberalisation, anxious to protect its gas monopoly, Gaz de France, and arguing that gas is a strategic resource which should not be subjected to market forces.

But Luxembourg, keen to list a gas agreement among the achievements of its EU presidency, has warned it may push the issue to a vote if a consensus cannot be reached. That could see France and other opponents of liberalisation outvoted.

If an accord is not reached during Luxembourg's pres-

dency, the UK – the EU's biggest gas producer, whose domestic market will be fully open to competition by next year – has indicated it will push hard for a deal during its presidency.

Ministers will discuss a formula which would ensure that all gas users consuming more than a certain annual volume were free to shop around for supplies. It would require each EU state to open between 23 and 38 per cent of its total market, by volume, to competition initially – although states

could go further if they chose.

After five years, the minimum and optional maximum bands would rise to 28-38 per cent, and after 10 years to 38-48 per cent. The minimum percentages are similar to those agreed in last year's directive on liberalising the electricity market.

Ministers must also agree on how to deal with long-term "take or pay" contracts, under which national gas monopolies contract to purchase gas from producers for as long as 20 years.

Paris proposes overtime rate cap

By Andrew Jack in Paris

French employees who work more than the government's proposed legal limit of 35 hours a week will be entitled to overtime rates of up to 25 per cent above the normal wage, two ministers indicated yesterday.

In a letter to 150,000 businesses for arrival today, Martine Aubry, the employment minister, and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, economic, finance and industry minister, said there would be an upper limit on overtime rates of 125 per cent for employees working between 35 and 39 hours a week.

Details of the cap – which is equivalent to the existing theoretical legal overtime rate for employees who work more than 39 hours a week – clarifies some cost implications of the government's "working hours" plan, unveiled in October.

However, the two ministers stressed that legislation introducing a 35-hour week would include mechanisms designed to "prevent excess" in the use of overtime.

Their initiative came as the battle intensified over the government's controversial proposals to cut working hours, which has pitted it against many businesses.

The CNPF, the country's leading employers' federation, released a poll yesterday suggesting that employers and employees alike believed reduced working hours was the least likely measure to cut France's high level of unemployment.

The poll came ahead of a week of meetings planned by the federation to discuss the policy.

The federation will also elect a new president to replace Jean Gantot who resigned in protest at the working hours proposals.

Ernest-Antoine Seillière, his likely successor, recently called on companies to use the debate over the 35-hour week to "destabilise" Lionel Jospin, the prime minister.

The poll showed that 85 per cent of heads of companies opposed the 35-hour week, while 68 per cent of employees were in favour.

However, only 2 per cent of employers and 12 per cent of employees thought the measure would help create jobs.

Both groups argued that the most important initiative would be to reduce France's high level of social security contributions.

Some 61 per cent of employers said the 35-hour week would harm employment, and 63 per cent said it would increase labour costs by more than 5 per cent.

NEWS DIGEST

Swiss Bank is accused over victims' assets

Swiss Bank Corporation was yesterday accused by the New York State Banking Department of providing inaccurate responses and withholding information from officials attempting to check whether it held assets belonging to holocaust victims. The move is deeply damaging for the bank, coming on the eve of today's conference of public finance officials in New York, which will attempt to agree a common response on the issue, possibly including barring Swiss banks from new business.

According to an order signed by Elizabeth McCaul, New York's acting superintendent of banks, Swiss Bank "has not acted with appropriate speed and diligence in responding to request for information" on assets held in New York. She said that Ernst & Young, the auditors appointed by the state, had not been provided with certain relevant records and documents, and that Swiss Bank had "provided inaccurate responses to inquiries concerning wartime accounts".

Swiss Bank has now been ordered to submit a written report recommending improvements to its record-keeping practices, and reviewing the number of staff it devotes to handling inquiries about wartime accounts. Swiss Bank will be required to provide the banking department, which has the power to rescind its licence to do business in New York, with monthly updates on its progress.

John Ashton, New York

GERMAN TAX

Deal on VAT rise close

Hopes rose yesterday for a deal between the Bonn government and the opposition Social Democrat party to prevent higher pension contributions pushing up Germany's non-wage labour costs next year. The two sides were said to be close to agreeing to raise the standard rate of value added tax to 16 per cent from 15 per cent to prevent a planned increase in pension contributions to 21 per cent of gross wages next year from 20.3 per cent.

Coalition leaders and senior SPD politicians also discussed stalled plans for reform of Germany's complex and inequitable income tax system in confidential talks. The chances of a tax breakthrough are less clear, although a "mini-reform" may be possible following a proposal from Oskar Lafontaine, SPD leader, for an across-the-board reduction of 4 percentage points in tax rates from 1998.

Peter Norman, Bonn

TURKISH POLITICS

Fresh doubts on inflation plan

The resignation of a senior Turkish technocrat has increased concern over the viability of the government's planned assault on inflation, which ministers expect to reach 100 per cent by the end of the year. Mahir Egilmez resigned as treasury undersecretary on Friday in protest against a proposal to freeze public sector prices for six months as part of an attempt to halve inflation by the end of 1998.

The Istanbul stock exchange's main index closed 2.78 per cent lower on Friday and bond yields climbed around three percentage points on rumours that Mr Egilmez was about to resign. Mr Yilmaz now seems intent on moving ahead with a gradual, three-year reform programme to reduce inflation to 3 per cent by 2000. Mr Yilmaz has said his fragile coalition of left wing and conservative parties would not support radical reforms. Bankers say a gradual approach is unlikely to work.

John Barham, Ankara

VENEZUELAN ECONOMY

IMF discusses programme

Venezuela and the International Monetary Fund this week hold talks about an economic "shadow programme" following the government's earlier rejection of an IMF demand to raise petrol prices. In response to IMF demands for further anti-inflationary measures, the government will set aside an estimated \$1bn in proceeds from privatisation and oil tenders to service its foreign debt.

The government also announced bright economic results for 1997 with higher estimates for GDP growth at 6 per cent, up from earlier forecasts of 4 per cent. Luis Raúl Matos Azcarraga, Venezuela's finance minister, said the non-oil sector of the economy grew faster than expected, at 5.2 per cent instead of 3.1 per cent. Raymond Collier, Caracas

POLISH POLITICS

New leader for ex-communists

Poland's main opposition party, the former communists, has voted to replace Józef Oleksy who led the movement to defeat in recent parliamentary elections. A congress of the Social Democracy of Poland (SDP) meeting at the weekend selected Leszek Miller as the new party leader. Mr Miller served in the Communist Party leadership before it fell from power in 1989 and was interior minister in the last coalition government. Mr Oleksy became the leader of the SDP two years ago after unproven accusations that he had maintained contact with a Russian spy forced him to resign as prime minister.

Christopher Bobinski, Warsaw

DUTCH STOCKS SCANDAL

Most suspects released

Dutch judges have released a batch of suspects arrested in a scandal surrounding dealings on the Amsterdam stock exchange. Of 15 held, only four last night remained in custody. Among those freed was André Baar, chairman of NBM-Amstelbank, a large construction group. He has been accused of money laundering and making false declarations, but his lawyer said the investigation solely concerned Mr Baar's tax returns. Others released included Barry van den Brink, Dick du Cloo and Roger Leroy, former securities executives. Three senior stockbrokers – Adri Strating, Han Vermeulen and Dick Visser – remain in prison along with Fred Hendriks, a director of the Phillips pension fund. They are accused of belonging to a criminal organisation, bribery, false declarations and tax fraud.

Gordon Crabb, Amsterdam

MEXICO'S CURRENCY

Floating rate system to stay

Mexico's floating exchange rate system, introduced under duress and regarded as a temporary expedient during the 1994-95 financial crisis, is likely to remain indefinitely, according to the Mexican finance minister. Guillermo Ortiz said the Asian currency turmoil had helped confirm him of the advantages of flexible exchange rates.

Before the disastrous 1994 devaluation, Mexico used to establish each year a rate of maximum currency depreciation in an attempt to reduce inflation. Soon after the devaluation, the central bank had insufficient reserves to defend any level for the peso and was forced to float it. Mr Ortiz said he had changed his mind because the regime had proved more stable than expected and because only two kinds of currency regimes were viable. These were a monetary board arrangement, which fixes a currency against another, leaving monetary policy to be determined by flows of funds in and out of the economy, or the free floating regime.

Stephen Fisher, Mexico City

Deadlines plan for Bosnia talks

By Guy Dimmore in Belgrade

Western governments, frustrated by the foot-dragging of Bosnia's reluctant peace partners, plan to impose deadlines for resolving serious disputes that have blocked reintegration of the war-tattered country.

Diplomats said foreign ministers would meet in Bonn tomorrow and Wednesday to hammer home the message that a US-driven policy of more robust intervention would prevail, although France and Russia oppose proposals to increase the powers of the international community's High Representative in Bosnia.

A draft resolution of the Peace Implementation Council, grouping the major western powers plus Russia and Japan, sets a December 15 deadline for agreement between Bosnia's Moslem, Croat and Serb leaders on a common citizenship law, passport and car registration.

By December 20 all three parties are to agree on a common national flag and currency and a customs pact. Other deadlines to be

met over the coming months include amendment of the Bosnian Serb privatisation law, the return of refugees and laws on property rights and foreign investment.

Although the civil war ended with the signing of the US-mediated Dayton peace accord two years ago, Bosnia remains effectively divided into three areas of control with little contact or co-operation between them. Only the presence of 34,000 Nato-led troops prevents renewed war.

Failure to agree on the design of a common currency has delayed the signing of a letter of intent that would pave the way for a \$100m stand-by credit from the International Monetary Fund. Bosnians currently use three different currencies plus the D-Mark.

Similar disputes over the design of national symbols and a common passport mean that many Bosnians cannot travel abroad. Movement between the Moslem-Croat federation and the Bosnian Serb entity is limited because car licence plates identify the ethnic origins of their owners.

Yugoslavia's President Slobodan Milosevic and his wife Mira Markovic cast their votes yesterday as Serbs go to the polls for the third time in as many months to fill the vacancy left by Mr Milosevic last July.

With none of the seven candidates likely to secure an absolute majority, analysts predict a run-off on December 21 between Milorad Mihaljevic of the ruling Socialists and Vojislav Seselj, leader of the extreme nationalist Radical party. In the last round two months ago Mr Seselj unexpectedly defeated the previous Socialist candidate but was narrowly denied victory when less than 50 per cent of the electorate voted.

With few independent observers monitoring the polls many Serbs suspect that Mr Milosevic, now president of federal Yugoslavia, will ensure one way or another that Mr Seselj fails again. If so Serbia's political vacuum will be filled by the speaker of parliament, a Socialist, while Mr Milosevic consolidates his new power base with no rival to challenge him. The US has branded Mr Seselj a fascist and diplomats suggest western governments will not protest too loudly if the Socialists do him defeat in two weeks' time.

Guy Dimmore, Belgrade

Banks' early birds close window of risk

By George Graham, Banking Editor

The largest US banks today start opening in the middle of the night to make the flow of money around the world's payment systems safer.

Fedwire and Chips, the two principal New York payment systems, which between them handle around \$2,500bn of cash transfers a day, were for the first time opening at 12.30am this morning.

This means Fedwire is now open 18 hours a day, overlapping with European large value payment systems and even giving a small overlap with Japan.

The overlap gives banks

the opportunity to synchronise their foreign exchange payments to one another, reducing the risk of being left hundreds of millions of dollars short if one of their trading partners goes bust.

Ernest Patrik, first vice president at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, said volumes in the early morning session would probably be small to start with but banks would find ways of using the facility.

Central bankers have been pressing for steps to eliminate foreign exchange settlement risk ever since the 1974 failure of Bankhaus Herstatt, a small German bank active in the foreign exchange market. Herstatt

collapsed after it had received D-Marks from its trading partners through the German payments system, but before New York had opened for it to pay over the corresponding dollars.

Louder opening hours for Fedwire, operated by the Federal Reserve, and Chips, run by the New York Clearing House Association, will remove that time lag.

JoAnne Glazer, global clearing executive at Chase Manhattan, said that although the extended Fedwire day would not yet allow real-time synchronisation of payments, it would greatly reduce the window of risk. "It's an extremely important initiative aimed at improv-

ing the safety and soundness of payments systems worldwide," she said.

The CLS Bank, a central clearing house bank which some of the world's largest banks are setting up with the aim of providing full synchronisation of foreign exchange settlements, will eventually be able to make use of the extended opening hours.

David Budinger, division risk manager at Citibank, said the 18-hour day would also give banks

NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

Thailand to shut non-bank institutions

By Ted Bardacke
in Bangkok

Thailand will today close down most of its non-bank financial institutions just hours before an International Monetary Fund deadline, senior Thai officials said at the weekend.

"It should not be any surprise that all or nearly all of these companies will go under," said Pitisit Lee-eltam, the deputy finance minister. "People have been using this issue as a benchmark to see if the government is committed to a restructuring of the financial system."

Immediately at issue are 58 finance companies, specialising in consumer, property and stock market lending, which were suspended months ago.

The new government led by Chuan Leekpai now faces calls to purge the central bank of people responsible for failed regulation of the financial system. Also at stake is more than \$2bn in foreign lending to the suspended companies.

Last week a public row over the fate of Finance One, the largest suspended company, broke out between CS First Boston and a group of senior foreign creditors led by Germany's WestLB. Both companies submitted last minute plans to take over Finance One, but they represent different interests:

CSFB holds nearly \$20m in Finance One eurobonds, while other creditors are mostly direct lenders.

For those companies that are shut down, creditors will receive the proceeds of liquidated assets.

Foreign creditors have said they want to be treated fairly in this sale process or they will hesitate to roll over their other credits to Thailand.

NEWS DIGEST

Shanghai banks' offshore role

China announced over the weekend it would soon allow banks in Shanghai to start offshore banking business, a further step towards developing Shanghai into one of the world's financial centres. Banks in Pudong, the development zone in Shanghai earmarked to become China's Wall Street, will be selected to carry out offshore banking business on an experimental basis, according to a report in the Shanghai Securities News, the official newspaper. Banks will be allowed to offer offshore financial services for funds of non-residents of China, including overseas registered banks, companies and individuals.

The offshore banking business was not aimed at serving foreign companies registered in China, the newspaper said.

James Harding, Shanghai

ISRAELI STRIKE

Unions set to end action

Histadrut, Israel's trade union federation, said yesterday it was poised to sign an accord with Israel's finance ministry to end a nationwide strike by 700,000 public sector workers that has paralysed the economy since last Wednesday. Striking workers have shut down government offices, the stock exchange, banks and the airport, in a dispute with the government over pension rights, privatisation and economic reforms. The stoppage cost the Israeli economy \$2m a day, according to Israel's Manufacturers Association. Amir Peretz, Histadrut chairman, said the strike was justified and would be understood by the public.

Avi Machlis, Jerusalem

MOSSAD

Charges embarrass agency

The weekend disclosure of an embarrassing spy scandal has shaken Israel's Mossad intelligence agency to the core. The fiasco, in which Yehuda Gil, a former agent, was charged with disseminating disinformation over many years which endangered state security, comes two months after Mossad's reputation was severely hit when it bungled an assassination attempt in Jordan on an official of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement.

At the weekend, a Tel Aviv district court permitted newspaper publication of excerpts from the indictment against Mr Gil, who has been charged by the state attorney with fabricating information that "had decisive influence over state security".

Avi Machlis, Jerusalem

ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

Iran closes entry points

The Iranian government has declared a national holiday for the duration of the summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which runs for three days from tomorrow. All motorways into Tehran will be closed, as will airports serving international carriers. Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and not President Mohammad Khatami, is to open the summit, underlining the hold on foreign policy. Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman and the UAE will not be represented by heads of state.

The UAE has protested to the UN about Iran's naming of two naval vessels after islands in the Gulf occupied by Iraq but claimed by the UAE.

Robin Allen, Dubai

PHILIPPINE KIDNAPPINGS

Police chief resigns

The chief of the Philippine police force has resigned amid public anger at a wave of kidnappings. Recaredo Sarmiento, director general of the Philippine National Police, resigned on Friday, after two high-profile kidnappings of Chinese-Philippine businessmen last week. In one case, police themselves killed the kidnap victim - the son-in-law of John Gokongwei, one of the country's wealthiest businessmen - in a gun battle with escaping kidnappers. A citizens' monitoring group said there had been 204 kidnappings in the first 11 months of the year. Fall-out from the Asian crisis pushed Philippine inflation up from 5.7 per cent year-on-year in October to 6.5 per cent in November.

Justin Marazzi, Manila

Anwar left to bring the bad tidings

It is rare for Mahathir to be more than a hair's breadth from events. James Kynge reports



Mahathir Mohamad, the Malaysian prime minister, was on a faraway island last week launching a space programme which may yield results in the next century.

On the same day, in Kuala Lumpur, his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, was launching an economic programme that he hopes will yield results rather sooner.

It is rare for Dr Mahathir to be more than a hair's breadth from the seminal events shaping his nation.

But when Mr Anwar, who is also finance minister, unveiled the government's most significant policy shift since south-east Asia's financial crisis began in July, Dr Mahathir was miles away.

Inevitably, Dr Mahathir's absence provoked questions over the likely success of the new austerity measures, and over whether his influence is

finally fading after 16 years at the helm.

The prime minister's first remarks on the package yesterday were terse. Still on

the island of Langkawi off the north-west coast, he said only that the measures announced were necessary to restore confidence in financial markets.

Observers said that while

Mr Anwar's prominence is aimed at maintaining budget surpluses.

Growth is now forecast to drop to 4.5 per cent in 1998 from an earlier prediction of 7 per cent, Mr Anwar said. So-called "megaprojects", such as a multi-billion dollar road and rail link from Malaysia to Thailand which Dr Mahathir was promoting as recently as last week, have been postponed indefinitely.

Mr Anwar's gamble is that medicine prescribed at home can preclude more bitter remedy administered later by outsiders.

The stock market's decline by more than 50 per cent from its peak this year and the ringgit's precipitous decline mean that Malaysia had no choice but to take radical steps.

But perhaps the deputy prime minister's boldest stroke was to rule out a 18 per cent cut in federal government expenditure in 1998, with an immediate reduction of 10 per cent, was

aimed at maintaining budget surpluses.

Bankruptcies among these entrepreneurs would be most unpopular within the United Malays National Organisation (Umno), which elects the country's top leaders.

It will be tough to carry through measures which could affect the power bases of both Dr Mahathir and Mr Anwar in Umno.

But if financial markets get wind that the austerity package is being diluted, they may react negatively, economists said.

The catch is that investors may also take fright when they see how much pain the austerity package inflicts, at least until the first signs of recovery become clear.

EU says US must match its softer stance on greenhouse gas emissions at talks on global warming

UN summit looks to Gore for concessions

By Leyla Boufous,
Environment Correspondent,
in Kyoto

Al Gore, the US vice-president, is today expected to deliver concessions needed to secure a deal to fight the impact of global warming.

The European Union said last night it was up to Mr Gore, who arrived in Kyoto this morning, to match a softer EU stance announced yesterday.

"If Al Gore had nothing to offer he would not be coming to Kyoto," said Johnny Lahure, environment minister for Luxembourg, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency.

Ministers today take over the Kyoto talks from officials to achieve by Wednesday, when the conference ends, a deal curbing industrialised countries' green-

house gas emissions by 2010. Mr Gore is under pressure to offer a more substantial US reduction target and be more flexible in seeking commitments from developing countries.

The EU for its part yesterday abandoned its insistence that all countries agree a flat-rate cut which individual EU members could collectively achieve through differentiated targets.

Ritt Bjerregaard, EU environment commissioner, said the 15-nation bloc would insist that only Japan and the US, along with the EU, be held to a common target. But John Prescott, UK deputy prime minister, who is likely to play a pivotal role in the talks' end-game, suggested even Japan and the US could have a different target if this amounted to a comparable burden to the EU.

Mr Prescott said a more ambitious US target was also essential for convincing developing countries to play what Washington insists

Mr Prescott agreed with Ms Bjerregaard however that the US had to do more than offer to stabilise emissions at 1990 levels. Japan's proposal for a 2.5 per cent cut in emissions also needed improving.

Mr Prescott said European public opinion would not understand why nations which did "rather better" than the EU economically should get off more lightly in cutting emissions. The most important greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, emitted from the burning of fossil fuels. The US, already 11 per cent above 1990 levels of carbon dioxide emissions, argues its proposed "stabilisation" target for emissions is comparable to a 15 per cent cut for the EU.

Mr Prescott said a more ambitious US target was also essential for convincing developing countries to play what Washington insists

should be a "meaningful" role in fighting climate change.

Developing countries on

Friday rejected a proposal by New Zealand that they agree a deadline for capping their emissions once the industrialised world started cutting theirs. But Mr Prescott warned developing nations unless they compromised, nothing would be done by the US to tackle a problem which threatened them too.

The US Senate has said it will not ratify any deal that does not offer matching com-

mitments by developing countries. The White House however says it is simply seeking a formula that will commit developing countries to more climate-friendly growth with the help of know-how from the industrialised world.

Greenpeace protest in Kyoto during UN global warming talks yesterday

Photo: AP

India tries to calm effects of roller-coaster political ride

Delhi aims to keep a steady hand on economy ahead of poll

India's latest political turmoil has delivered an unwelcome dose of uncertainty to an already limping economy. The question is whether disruption caused by the world's biggest election process will deliver more serious economic damage.

With elections now due in late February or early March, India faces a legislative hiatus of at least five months.

The caretaker government of L K Gujral insists it will keep a steady hand on the economic rudder over the next few weeks. The finance minister, P Chidambaram, said at the weekend: "Whatever decisions have been approved by the cabinet will be implemented."

The view of business leaders was that the poll would deliver another blow to confidence but might at least clear India's muggy political air.

The chief consequence of the hiatus will be an indefinite delay to passage of a series of important bills which the United Front (UF) coalition government had lined up for the now abandoned session of parliament.

These include a companies bill, an income tax act, reformed foreign exchange regulations and laws for dealing with "sick" companies, along with separate legislation to create new regula-

tory authorities for the power sector.

Also on hold is legislation endowing India's insurance regulatory authority with statutory powers, a law necessary to begin limited liberalisation of the state monopoly insurance industry, a new civil aviation policy,

and formulation of a new broadcast bill, which has significant implications for foreign ownership of television and satellite broadcasting channels in India.

The better news is the caretaker UP's commitment to push through a series of

through aggressive tax cuts and a series of inflationary credit policies, growth this year looks likely to reach at best 5.5 per cent, rather than the 7 per cent forecast by the government earlier this year.

Delays to an economic upturn will only further weaken India's increasingly fragile fiscal position.

This year's target fiscal deficit of 4.5 per cent of gross domestic product - against 5.2 per cent last year - looks unobtainable.

Lower than expected growth has led to man-

two more international offerings.

He claimed tax receipts were "looking much better".

But most neutral observers see a large revenue shortfall.

India's fiscal vulnerability is unlikely to subject it to the kind of crisis witnessed in south-east Asia.

India's economy remains

more domestically oriented than those of its eastern neighbours.

Its currency is not yet fully convertible on capital account, its reserves are healthy and its trade deficit still manageable.

The only backlash so far has been in Asian fund redemptions contributing to a net \$14m outflow of portfolio investment funds by foreign institutional investors from India's capital markets in 1992.

"Markets are so nervous,

and so you must retain stable macroeconomic policy,"

says a western economist.

"Any chinks in that are going to be found out by the markets and punished."

Mr Chidambaram appears

to have got the message.

"It has been a roller-coaster year," he said. "Our government fell victim to Asia's tumbling markets and was postponed.

Mr Chidambaram said his government would try to bring the GAIL issue to market as soon as possible,

and press ahead with

Land defeat puts pressure on Howard

By Jenny McAsey in Sydney

The rejection by Australia's parliament of native title legislation has intensified pressure on the government over race issues and increased the likelihood of an early election.

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an early election.

The government will resubmit the original legislation to the Senate in March and if, as widely predicted, it is rejected a second time, it will provide the trigger for an early election.

The government is not due to go to the polls until March 1998.

If the coalition wins the election following a double dissolution, it could hold a joint sitting of parliament which would provide the numbers to pass the contentious legislation.

But opinion polls published at the weekend showed the government trailing the Labor opposition by about 15 points - 52 to 37 - and most pundits predict Mr Howard would wait until at least July before going to the voters.

Mr Howard, under growing pressure from rural and mining interests to sort out the uncertainty over native title following last year's Wik High Court decision, has signalled his determination to maintain a strong stand over the legislation and fight criticism that he is a weak leader.

However, the prospect of a government-backed election over the Wik issue has raised concerns about an election campaign

Shipley shifts NZ cabinet to right

MONDAY DECEMBER 10

tidings

James Kyng reports

... by differential polices. We have and will continue to do our best to make sure that the environment is protected from all kinds of damage. But we also believe that the environment is strong enough to withstand the pressures of development and that it can be strengthened through the power of science and technology.

cks on global warming



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Howard



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NEWS: UK

Farmers gather to plan the next stage of their battle to win subsidies

More protests against Irish beef

By George Parker and Alison Maitland in London and Juliette Jowit in Holyhead

Farmers leaders from across Britain will meet in London today to plan the next stage of their campaign to win extra subsidies for cattle farmers, amid renewed demonstrations at ports against cheap imports of Irish beef.

Yesterday there were pickets by farmers at ports including Stranraer in Scotland and Holyhead in Wales, but they were smaller than had been expected.

However, police arrested five farmers attempting to use tractors and cattle trailers to blockade Dover, to stop imports of beef from the Continent.

Some senior National Farmers Union officials are calling for a period of peace at the ports, to allow the government to assess their claims for extra subsidies in a less confrontational atmosphere.

Last week the ministry of agriculture made it clear it could not be seen to be giving in to farmers adopting the same kind of "direct action" used by their French counterparts.

Jack Cunningham, agriculture minister, is considering help for cattle farmers worst hit by the strong pound and a lack of consumer confidence heightened by last



Farmers use vehicles to blockade the port of Dover, on the south coast of England, and (inset) pickets at Holyhead, Wales

week's warnings that BSE might be transmitted through beef bones.

However the Treasury is refusing to sanction any increase in the ministry of agriculture budget, which is already tightly stretched.

The government may find it difficult politically to find more money for cattle farmers when it is pushing through legislation to cut benefits to lone parents.

Farmers leaders have

ruled out a mass rally in London for fear of causing disruption to the public.

In Wales farmers and families will be picking supermarkets, urging store managers to take imported meat off the shelves and the public to buy British products.

National and regional newspapers will be used for a nationwide advertising campaign to explain farmers' grievances, and their claim to European subsidies which

the UK has not taken up. These could amount to almost £1bn, but the British taxpayer would have to meet 71 per cent of the cost.

Yesterday's port demonstrations were expected to be the largest yet, to coincide with the busiest day for beef shipments from Ireland, but there were few major incidents.

Yesterday afternoon only a small delegation of farmers was at Stranraer on the west

coast of Scotland to check Irish trucks' cargoes under police escort, although hundreds more were planning to picket the port and Cairnryan overnight.

Jim Walker of the National Farmers' Union of Scotland and organiser of the protest, said: "After this, we'll step back and give the government time for reflection so they see sense and the depth of feeling throughout the UK."

'United Ireland' call may put talks in danger

By George Parker
in London

Tensions in the Northern Ireland political talks are expected to mount this week, when leaders of Sinn Féin, political wing of the Irish Republican Army, tell Tony Blair that the peace process must ultimately lead to a united Ireland.

In a face-to-face meeting with the prime minister, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin's most prominent figures, will also press Mr Blair in Downing Street to apologise for the British army's "bloody Sunday" shootings of civilians in Londonderry in 1972.

Yesterday Mr McGuinness travelled to South Armagh, the so-called "bandit country" previously associated with intense IRA activity, to assure a mass meeting that he had not given up hope of a united Ireland.

"They (the Government) have to face up to the fact that the purpose and object of this exercise is to unite the people of Ireland and eventually unite the island of Ireland," he said. "That is where we must be going in these talks."

"The reason why I was late today was because a man and a woman in South Armagh insisted on me having a very hearty meal," he told around 1,000 people in Crossmaglen.

"That may surprise some people. According to some journalists, people like me may not be too welcome in South Armagh. It just shows you how wrong they are."

Mr Blair's meeting with the Sinn Féin leadership has infuriated unionists. Yesterday David Trimble, Ulster Unionist leader, claimed that the IRA would soon be resuming its terrorist campaign.

The Ulster Unionists are the largest pro-British party in Northern Ireland.

"The prime minister will know even before he sees these people, he will know from his own security assessment... that the probability is that Sinn Féin will revert to violence in the New Year," he told BBC television's *On The Record* programme.

Mr Trimble claimed that Mo Mowlam, Northern Ireland secretary, was keen to accommodate Sinn Féin's demands. He said he believed that she wanted to drive his party out of the talks.

UK NEWS DIGEST

US company in Scottish project

Cadence Design Systems, a US company which produces software used in the design of electronic products, is poised to announce the setting up of a software tool design facility in Scotland. The project could involve academic institutions and electronic manufacturers in Scotland and lead to the creation of 1,800 jobs over the next five years, it is believed.

Details of the project are being kept secret until they are announced on Wednesday by Scottish Office ministers in London and Glasgow. Cadence Design Systems, based in California's silicon valley, has a network of research laboratories with a headquarters in Rome. The company had turnover of \$22.2m in the first nine months of 1997 and net revenue of \$8.9m. It employs more than 3,000 people around the world. *James Barron, Edinburgh*

■ BRITISH AIRWAYS

Crackdown on drunken passengers

British Airways yesterday announced a crackdown on drunken passengers. Anyone who appears to be drunk may be prevented from boarding aircraft, and cabin crew will stop serving alcohol to travellers who they believe are on the verge of drunkenness, the airline said. Duty Free liquor might also be removed from any inebriated passengers.

The move follows a rise in the number of drunken and disruptive passengers. It also follows two recent court cases in which inebriated travellers who assaulted staff received jail sentences of up to two years.

David Hyde, the BA director responsible for safety and security, said: "In common with most other air carriers we are experiencing an increase in the frequency and severity of disruptive and drunken behaviour."

■ CREDIT CARD FRAUD

Banks launch checking system

British banks will today strike another blow against credit card fraud with the launch of an expanded electronic "hot card file" which retailers can use to check if a customer is trying to pay with a stolen card.

Card Clear, which already distributes a hot card file to 8,500 retailers, has been awarded two contracts which will give it sole responsibility for collecting and distributing information on lost and stolen credit, debit and cheque guarantee cards.

Card Clear, which merged last year with Cardcast, its principal UK rival, already collects stolen card information from more than 20 banks, including Barclaycard, the UK's biggest card issuer. *George Graham, London*

■ TRADE UNIONS

Alarm over workplace rights

Trade union leaders are growing increasingly alarmed that Tony Blair, the prime minister, intends to dilute his commitment to provide trade unions with workplace recognition rights.

The Confederation of British Industry, principal employers' organisation, believes it has won an assurance from 10 Downing Street that companies need not recognise unions unless they can secure the full consent of 50 per cent plus one of those employed in the proposed bargaining unit. A spokesman from the Department of Trade and Industry said yesterday the matter was "under consideration" and it would be dealt with in the government's white paper early next year. Union leaders argue the law should require only a majority of those who vote in the ballot for recognition to agree to require the employer to comply. *Robert Taylor, London*

■ BRITISH MUSEUM

Trustees decide against charges

The British Museum has decided not to introduce an entry charge for its 6.7m annual visitors. The trustees, who are faced with a projected financial shortfall of more than £3m, have decided on a range of money-making and cost-saving measures. These include charging more for services and for special exhibitions; seeking ways of reclaiming a higher proportion of value added tax; attracting higher donations from visitors; and spending less on acquisitions. The British Museum's decision was welcomed by the directors of the other non-charging museums, such as the National Gallery, the Tate and the National Portrait Gallery. *Antony Thorncroft, London*

■ CONSUMER SPENDING

Institute forecasts sharp fall

The Chartered Institute of Marketing, the professional body for marketing and sales, is forecasting a sharp fall in consumer spending next year as consumer confidence declines. In its quarterly market report, the institute is forecasting a "growth recession", which stops short of the severe economic downturn of the early 1980s and 1990s. Douglas McWilliams, economic adviser of the CIM, said: "This time the economy will gently go off the boil and indeed for those companies facing skill shortages or input cost pressures, the growth slowdown may make life easier." *Wolfgang Münchau, London*

■ HARRODS BANK

Separate business from store

Harrods Bank has asked us to point out that it has no connection with the safety deposit boxes at Harrods, mentioned in Friday's report about rents filed by Tiny Rowland. The boxes are controlled by the store. The bank operates as an entirely separate business in whose running the store has no say.

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Cambridge University aims to achieve the highest quality in teaching and research

Revolt by MPs clouds 'exclusion unit' launch

By George Parker,
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair, the prime minister, will today launch the government's much-vaunted "social exclusion unit", against a backdrop of growing discontent among Labour MPs at plans to cut benefits to lone parents.

Mr Blair will argue that the 12-strong unit, including civil servants and business people, will focus government policy on helping the most disadvantaged members of society.

The initiative will be backed by the provision of £200m (\$343m) of National Lottery funds to create a network of after-school home-work clubs.

However, the launch will be soured by the prospect of a revolt by Labour MPs on Wednesday, when the House of Commons debates the government's plan to scrap lone parent benefits for new

claimants, amounting to a cut of up to £11 a week.

John Mark, Labour MP for Wrexham, said yesterday he believed as many as 25 of his colleagues would join him in opposing the cut, when the social security bill reached its report stage, with up to 60 abstentions.

A handful of parliamentary private secretaries - the most junior members of the government - have expressed concerns about the wisdom of the policy, and could be sacked if they fail to back the bill.

But yesterday Stephen Byers, education minister, said there would be no U-turn, arguing that government policy was designed to help lone parents "swap the giro cheque [benefit payment] for the pay slip".

The social exclusion unit, to be headed by Moira Wallace, a former private secretary to John Major, former Conservative Party prime

minister, will be told to focus on three areas initially: truancy and exclusion from school, homelessness and the social problems on housing estates. It has been asked to report by next spring.

As part of the drive to tackle truancy, Mr Blair will announce a £20m initiative to set up after-school clubs at half of all secondary schools and one-quarter of primary schools by 2001.

However Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said alternative educational provision for truants and disruptive children would be better than "gimmicky after-school clubs".

Tesco, the supermarket chain, will today announce that it plans to create 1,500 jobs for people taking part in the government's New Deal welfare-to-work scheme.

"We're going to be looking closely at all of the options," the exchange said.

Miner attacks power company

By Simon Holberton

power station at Uskmouth, near Newport, in Wales is being unfairly opposed by National Power.

The dispute between the two companies poses a dilemma for the government as it forces ministers to choose between two conflicting aims of policy: a cleaner environment and support for the coal industry. It comes after a week of high emotion about the future of deep coal mining in England and a government U-turn on gas-fired power stations.

Keith McNair, Celtic's chief executive, has written to John Battle, science, energy and industry minister, and Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, complaining that his attempt to buy a 360MW coal-fired

National Power sold for scrap in 1995, its ability to do so, however, is contingent on a licence to operate from the Environment Agency.

The Welsh miner claims that as Uskmouth was originally licensed in the 1960s it should qualify as "old plant" for the purposes of environmental regulation.

Such regulation would commit it to fitting the best available technology to reduce emissions only as long as the costs were not excessive.

National Power, which is Celtic's biggest customer,

confirmed at the weekend that it had written to the Environment Agency arguing that the plant should be subject to "new plant standards" requiring Celtic to invest in the latest technology to reduce emissions of ash, and the oxides of sulphur and nitrogen. Such technology would cost many times more than the £40m Celtic thinks it needs to spend to revive the power station.

Mr McNair said National Power's actions "may obstruct the emergence of competition".

Employer. "That is not the thought behind the process," said Mishcon de Reya, which is supporting Ms Greenlaw with an office and £10,000 (\$16,700) a year. "We would have given the money to the arts anyway, but this way we are getting the benefits."

Mr Sansom, a poetry lecturer and founder of the literary magazine *The North*, is the first national appointment in the Poetry Places programme run by the Poetry Society. It aims to have 100 poets in UK schools and businesses funded by a £450,000 grant from the National Lottery.

M & S said the aim was not to have sales staff spontaneously reciting verse at the till. Instead, Mr Sansom would be giving weekly poetry readings and workshops in head office and at stores around the country simply to encourage the "creative side of our people", said Ms Cheryl Kincznay of M & S. "It is about getting the poet out in your staff."

Mr Sansom's appointment is part of what appears to be a growing corporate interest in poetry in the workplace. Law firm Mishcon de Reya earlier this year appointed its own resident poet, Lavinia Greenlaw, and London Zoo was also reported to be interested in the idea.

But unlike the ancient bards of old, the resident poet will not be forced to sing the praises of his or her

128 Yacht 1520

MONDAY DECEMBER 8 1997
FINANCIAL TIMES

FINANCIAL TIMES MONDAY DECEMBER 8 1997

company in
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decide against charges

forecasts sharp fall

te business from store

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in consulting
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THE WEEK AHEAD

DIVIDEND & INTEREST PAYMENTS

■ TODAY

Abbey National Treasury Gtd FRN 1999 \$14.30 Bowthorpe 3.43p British Dredging 2.8p Halifax FRN 1999 £182.31 Hammerson 10% Bd 2013 £1075.0 Harrisons & Crosfield 1p Housing Assoc Fdg 814% Soc Ln-Bkd Nts Jun 2027 2412.50 Invesco English & Int Tst 0.6p MEPC 80% Bd 2008 £25.50 Nippon Credit Bank Fin Gtd Fxd/FRN Dec 2004 \$3250.38 Novartis FRN Dec 2002 \$14.46 Pernod 1.2p Reed Int 5% Cm Pt 1.75p Do 7.9% Cm Pt 2.45p Uppercase FRN 1998 \$311.03

■ TOMORROW

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■ WEDNESDAY

Alleged-Signal \$0.18 Anglo American Inv Tst R1.34 Anglo Irish Bank FRN 1998 £185.43 Asahi Bank Y3.50 Autobacs Seven Y16.0 Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi Y4.25 Central Hispano Eurocapital Se A Fr N/Vgt Pt \$0.51 Chevron \$0.58 CPT 3.3p Dutch Kangyo Bank Y4.25 Dun & Bradstreet \$0.22 Electronic Data Systems \$0.15 Exxon \$0.41 Fomriner 1.22p Fuji Bank Y4.25 General Motors \$0.50 Halifax 13% Perp Sb Bd £2405.25 Do FRN 1999 \$14.46 Heworth 3p Hitachi Credit (UK) 1.7p Houston Inds \$0.375 IBM (EU) \$0.20 Mitsubishi Y4.0 Mitsubishi Elec Y4.0 Mobil \$0.53 National Australia Bank Sb Var Rate Nts 2000 £186.05 Nat West Bank Var Rate Cap Nts 2009 £191.04 NEC Y3.5 Postnet Bldg Scy FRN 1999 £184.31 Prestwick 0.7p Kubota FRN 1997 Y2326.0 Pfizer \$0.17 Roed Minnpac 9.18% Gtd Sec Bd 2000-21 £245.0 Sakura Bank Y4.25 Sanwa Bank Y4.25 Standard Chartered Lnd Prim

DECEMBER 10

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■ THURSDAY

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■ FRIDAY

December 12 Sumitomo Bank Cap Mkts Gtd Fxd/FRN 2003 \$61000.0 Sumitomo Heavy Inds FRN 1998 Y21519.0 Sumitomo Realty & Dev 3.05% Nts 1997 Y305000.0 Do 3.55% Nts 1999 Y355000.0 TDI Y25.0 Telsil 7.1% Bd 1998 Y70000.0 Do 7.1% Bd 1998 Y70000.0 Texaco \$0.45 Tokai Bank Y4.25 Toshiba Y5.0 Toyota 8% 2003 £4.0 Utii Technologies \$0.31 Versailles 0.215pcp Warner-Lambert \$0.38 Wesol 0.8p Westpac Banking Rtg Rate Dep Rpts 2002 £1823.12 White Young Green 1.5p Young & Co's Brewery A 7.75p Do N/Vgt 7.75p

■ SATURDAY

December 13 Chugoku Elec Power 614% NEC Y3.5 Postnet Bldg Scy FRN 1999 £184.31 Prestwick 0.7p Kubota FRN 1997 Y2326.0 Pfizer \$0.17 Roed Minnpac 9.18% Gtd Sec Bd 2000-21 £245.0 Sakura Bank Y4.25 Sanwa Bank Y4.25 Standard Chartered Lnd Prim

■ TREASURY

Frigate Rate 1999 £1.7556 Treasury Frig Rate 1999 £1.7556

UK COMPANIES

■ TODAY

BOARD MEETINGS:
Finals:
API
Alders
Celtach
Electronic Data Processing
United Drug
Interims:
CRT
Carco Eng
Faupel Trading
Highams Systems
Janus
Marston Thompson & Everard
Total Systems

■ TOMORROW

COMPANY MEETINGS:
DFS Furniture, Moat House Hotel, Warmworth, Doncaster, South Yorks., 10.00 Estates & Agency, Institute of Directors, 116, Pall Mall, S.W., 11.00 GR, The Registry, Royal Mint Court, E.C., 11.00 Preseas, Middleover Court Hotel, Etwall Road, Middleover, Derby, 11.00 BOARD MEETINGS:
Finals:
Airtours
Firth Robson
Metroline
Morland
Sage
Interims:

Compass
Holmes & Merchant
Hoselock
Leeds
Vaux
Interims:
BSS
BTP
Berkeley
Drummond
Eonor
Feedback
Fuller Smith & Turner
Halma
Mentmore Abbey
Photofit
Real Time Control
Shelton (Maritz)
VHE

■ WEDNESDAY

COMPANY MEETINGS:
DFS Furniture, Moat House Hotel, Warmworth, Doncaster, South Yorks., 10.00 Estates & Agency, Institute of Directors, 116, Pall Mall, S.W., 11.00 GR, The Registry, Royal Mint Court, E.C., 11.00 Preseas, Middleover Court Hotel, Etwall Road, Middleover, Derby, 11.00 BOARD MEETINGS:
Finals:
Airtours
Firth Robson
Metroline
Morland
Sage
Interims:

■ THURSDAY

COMPANY MEETINGS:
DFS Furniture, Moat House Hotel, Warmworth, Doncaster, South Yorks., 10.00 Estates & Agency, Institute of Directors, 116, Pall Mall, S.W., 11.00 GR, The Registry, Royal Mint Court, E.C., 11.00 Preseas, Middleover Court Hotel, Etwall Road, Middleover, Derby, 11.00 BOARD MEETINGS:
Finals:
Airtours
Firth Robson
Metroline
Morland
Sage
Interims:

British Land
Butler (NP)
Limit
Martin Currie Smaller Co's Inv Tst
Powderjet
Pharmaceuticals
Scottish Hydro Electric
Smith (David S)
Vibroplant

■ FRIDAY DECEMBER 12

COMPANY MEETINGS:
Foreign & Colonial Emerging Mktcs Inv Tst, Exchange House, Primos Street, E.C., 12.15 Garfors Europe Inv Tst, Fenchurch Exchange, 8, Fenchurch Place, E.C., 2.15 BOARD MEETINGS:
Finals:
Grainger Tst
Interims:
Bandt
Braway
Swan (John)

Countryside Properties
Galen
Hunters Armley
Interims:
Atlantic Telecom
Harvey Nichols
Recat Elec
Shield Diagnostics

■ FRIDAY DECEMBER 12

COMPANY MEETINGS:
Foreign & Colonial Emerging Mktcs Inv Tst, Exchange House, Primos Street, E.C., 12.15 Garfors Europe Inv Tst, Fenchurch Exchange, 8, Fenchurch Place, E.C., 2.15 BOARD MEETINGS:
Finals:
Grainger Tst
Interims:
Bandt
Braway
Swan (John)

Company meetings are annual general meetings unless stated.
Reports and accounts are not normally available until six weeks after the board meeting to approve the preliminary results. This list is not comprehensive since companies are not obliged to notify the Stock Exchange of announcements.

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THIS WEEK

Name one after the 'Gipper'

Securing agreement on anything in Washington is difficult. But when it comes to deciding what great events or people merit their own memorials in the US capital, it is nearly impossible. More than 50 years after the fact, for example, there is still no consensus on an appropriate testament to the second world war – arguably the country's greatest and most morally unambiguous military triumph. A proposal to do just that has been attracting intense debate among the city's chattering classes for months.

In this particular case, the argument is as much about architecture as historical resonance: opponents claim to object to the design which would carve out a huge chunk of the grassy Mall at the city's heart, rather than the spirit in which it has been put forward.

The same cannot be said of a much more contentious proposal to rename the city's national airport after Ronald Reagan, the former Republican president, which

has prompted howls of outrage from many of its staunchly Democratic residents.

It is true that the most prominent point on the skyline is the obelisk named, like the city itself, after the country's first president, while among the main tourist attractions are imposing marble edifices named after Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. But they are the exceptions which prove the rule. In a town filled with politicians hoping to carve out their own legacy, agreement on the national relevance of their predecessors is hard to come by.

Even when new memorials are built, the final result rarely meets with unanimous praise, especially in the politically correct 1990s.

This year, Bill Clinton, the US president, presided over the opening of a site to commemorate the

funds were appropriated for a new statue of the wheelchair to add to the memorial.

It is revealing that it took 50 years to establish a memorial to FDR, widely regarded as the most successful president this century. More so, when you realise that such construction since 1945 when FDR himself opened the Jefferson memorial.

Republicans are unwilling to wait even a fraction as long to honour a man they believe to have been the equal of FDR. Although he is still alive, the nostalgia industry for "the Gipper" – now afflicted with Alzheimer's disease – is in full swing. Already, the government has agreed to name its newest federal building after him – an international trade centre that, second in size only to the Pentagon and costing more than \$600m, has

become the most expensive federal building yet constructed.

Many admirers feel that an over-budget behemoth set to house the Environment Protection Agency is an inappropriate memorial for a man who led the fight against intrusive federal bureaucracies and won the cold war in lieu of his own FDR-like monument (which many hope will follow), they are pushing for the airport name change as a substitute.

The idea was floated last month to little fanfare, but has been steadily gathering momentum. It has been endorsed by the Republican Governors Association, and is almost certain to be put to a vote when Congress returns in January. Newt Gingrich, House speaker, has said there is a "very high likelihood" Congress will try to pass such a

Manlow turnpike?"

Undaunted, proponents of the idea cite precedents for other leaders not yet deemed grand enough for a permanent memorial. John F Kennedy, for example, has his name attached to the city's premier arts centre as well as New York's biggest international airport. Even his brother Robert, only a presidential candidate at the time of his assassination in 1968, had his name emblazoned on the stadium that for years hosted the Washington Redskins, the local football team. If a local referendum were held, the idea would almost certainly be defeated. But the airport is owned by the federal government. That means city officials cannot overrule a vote in favour of the name change by the predominantly Republican Congress. And with Mr Clinton casting an anxious eye to his own impending legacy, few are betting he will want to use his presidential veto to set a precedent that could rebound on him in years to come.

FT GUIDE TO:

ENLARGING THE EU EASTWARDS

People are saying this is the decisive week for the EU plan to expand membership to the former Communist countries of central and eastern Europe. Is this true or Euro-hype?

If all goes to plan, the EU Summit in Luxembourg on Friday and Saturday will select a group of countries to begin negotiations in March 1998 about entry into the union early next century.

The favoured fast-track countries are the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Slovenia, and Cyprus.

Sounds like somebody is going to be disappointed?

There are plenty of bruised feelings in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. In particular, the two Baltic states have lobbied furiously to be put on an equal footing with neighbouring Estonia.

But true to form, EU leaders will do their utmost to produce a compromise which softens suggestions that there are any losers. No one wants to create a new iron curtain in Central Europe.

So what's the deal?

The slogan is "differentiation without discrimination". EU leaders will support the European Commission judgement that five central European countries plus Cyprus have made enough economic progress to open accession negotiations. But they will support the principle that other countries can join the advanced guard as soon as possible.

They may also blur the distinction by agreeing that all 10 applicants should be screened to see how far they meet the so-called *aquis communautaire* which covers the obligations of membership and compliance with the single market.

That sounds like a common starting line for everybody?

The correct term is the "regatta approach". Some countries, like Britain, thought they had torpedoed the idea, but the Danes and Swedes have lobbied on behalf of their Baltic buddies. The result is that Latvia and Lithuania have a good chance of joining the advance guard in 1999 when the serious bargaining about future membership begins.

In the meantime, all countries will be offered "accession partnerships" which will offer money and technical assistance in return for making progress towards fulfilling the conditions of membership.

What makes the eastern enlargement different from the previous expansions of the union?

The entry of post-imperial Britain, the accession of the club Med countries, and the Nordic expansion in the 1990s bear no comparison to the his-

toric challenge of eastern enlargement. The accession of 10 relatively poor, farm-intensive former command economies will force the EU to streamline the way it does business. It will mean streamlining its institutions, rethinking the national veto, the right to an EU commissioner in Brussels, even the right to work in one's own language. It will also mean reforming the Common Agriculture Policy and regional aid which have powerful political constituencies and account for 80 per cent of the EU budget.

It sounds like a recipe for inertia? Remember that the absorption of the 10 former Communist countries would mean the EU adding 28 per cent to its population but only 4 per cent to its gross domestic product on a purchasing power parity basis.

Even though countries such as Hungary and Poland are growing fast, the average per capita GDP is only one third of the average EU level. So that poses a dilemma: large cuts in regional aid and the CAP would risk triggering a backlash in western Europe against eastern enlargement.

Is there any way out of the impasse? The seeds of a compromise can be found in the European Commission's Agenda 2000 document which proposes a framework for a deal on the EU budget. The idea is to strike a balance between the net contributors such as Britain, France, and Germany, and the net beneficiaries led by Spain. Thus the Germans are adamant that the budget remains within its current agreed ceiling of 1.27 per cent of EU GDP. But Spain is determined to preserve as high a share of regional aid as possible.

Provided there is growth of 2.5 per cent per annum for the EU, there should be about 75 billion Ecu for the applicant countries between 2000 to 2006. The only drawback is that the commission's proposal favours the five front runners.

Any idea when the first wave of central Europeans will join the union?

The commission has pencilled in 2002-3. But this may be ambitious because the applicants have to make enormous strides to comply with the single market and enforce minimum standards in the environment, health and safety and social policy.

Enlargement is also hostage to the EU's own internal agenda. Member states still have to hold another constitutional conference (IGC) to streamline the commission and to rebalance power between small and large countries. Enlargement is the EU's mission for the millennium, but it is going to be a long haul.

Lionel Barber

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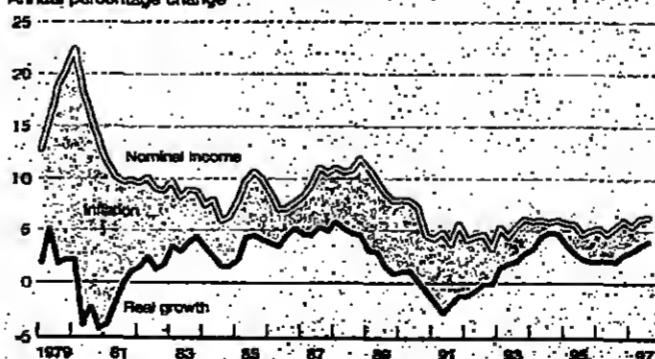
Robert Chote · Economics Notebook

Remote reward of pay restraint

The UK's chancellor may have overstated the scale of the pay-off

Wage inflation bad for growth

Annual percentage change



If economic activity is thought to be slightly above potential, it follows that unemployment is slightly below its sustainable rate (the so-called "non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment" or Nairu). Unemployment is about 7 per cent on the ILO's standard measure, in the middle of the 5.8 per cent range within which most current estimates of the Nairu lie.

The Treasury then presented

an alternative profile for output growth, to show what might be possible with pay restraint and if the chancellor's "welfare-to-work" initiative succeeded. By reducing wage pressure, the Treasury argued that this would increase the supply of labour available at any given real wage rate, allowing the economy to sustain higher growth during the next few years than past performance would seem to permit.

The Treasury's base case sce-

and welfare-to-work – as well as the speed with which they might be realised.

The wage subsidies which are central to the welfare-to-work programme are unlikely to produce any net increase in employment, on international evidence. Subsidising the long-term unemployed at the expense of the short-term unemployed and people in work should help to reduce wage pressure, but not dramatically.

David Bloom, at HSBC James Capel, argues that the employment opportunities planned for young people in the welfare-to-work programme might even tighten the labour market in the short-term and put upward pressure on wages. He sees a risk that the government's employment measures could stretch the new-found relationship between low unemployment and stable

average earnings growth to a cyclical breaking point.

But assume that this risk is overstated and pay restraint and welfare-to-work do reduce the sustainable level of unemployment by as much as the Green Budget suggests. The Treasury argues that the projected fall in the Nairu is equivalent to a 1.5 per cent one-off increase in potential output. That implies the inflation target could be delivered with growth of 2.75 per cent next year, 2 per cent in 1999 and 2.75 per cent in 2000.

But this higher growth path will not emerge automatically. As Mr Brown made clear in his Green Budget speech, much depends on the Bank of England. The chancellor and his officials may believe that the economy could sustain 2.75 per cent growth next year, but if the Bank's monetary policy committee does not agree with them we will never find out.

It is likely that the monetary policy committee could be convinced quickly enough that Britain was embarked on a mini supply-side miracle for it to set policy loose enough to deliver 2.75 per cent growth next year. Almost certainly not.

Restraint would certainly be welcome in the forthcoming wage round, and the Bank would reward it. But the chancellor may be overstating the speed and size of the pay-off which employees would receive.

*Nominal Income and the Inflation-Growth Divide, by Sheetal K Chand, IMP Working Paper 97/147, November 1997.
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MANAGEMENT

Among the world's big corporations, which will still be in good shape in 10 or 20 years? Try these for size:

- American International Group (AIG), the US insurer.
- Heineken, the Dutch brewer.
- Hewlett-Packard, the US electronics manufacturer.
- J.P. Morgan, the US bank.
- SGS-Thomson, the Franco-Italian semiconductor maker.

The names might seem rather a mixed bag. But these are the winners thrown up by a five-year research programme from Insead, the Fontainebleau-based business school.

The underlying premise of the study is straightforward. The success or failure of companies in the marketplace depends on a complex series of actions, which require many years to take effect.

By studying the past history of companies, it should be possible to spot the factors that have made a difference to long-run performance. On that basis, the Insead research team has bombarded companies with questions to find if they are doing the right things today to succeed in future.

By virtually all measures, AIG tops the rankings by a clear margin. Given the company's high reputation, this is interesting but not implausible. Some other findings are less expected.

Among electrical companies, such venerable US names as Xerox and Emerson Electric are edged out by Europeans: not only by SGS-Thomson, but by Danfoss, the Danish air conditioning and refrigeration company, and by Schneider, the French electrical engineer. And among consumer goods companies, Procter & Gamble trails behind Heineken and Whitbread, the UK brewer.

The study has some notable limitations. The companies quizzed, all among the world's top 1,000 by revenue, were drawn only from Europe and North America. Thus, the top car companies were found to be BMW, Volkswagen and General Motors. Toyota of Japan, an obvious candidate, was not included.

Second, companies were drawn from only six sectors: autos, computers and electrical, financial services, fast-moving consumer goods, oil and chemicals, and other services. Third, companies were ranked only if they gave adequate responses to the survey. The questionnaire, consisting of 157 questions, had to be answered by executives in various functions and at various levels of seniority within each company.

So what are the measures of a company's success? In essence, the 157 questions were boiled down to 12 "capabilities": customer orientation, technical resources, market strategy and so forth. Companies were assigned a score for each, and the results totted up to give an overall measure of market effectiveness.

According to Jean-Claude Larréché, who headed the project, it was important to keep the questions specific. Companies were asked, for instance, whether they had a web site, and how responsive their telephone operators were. The answers counted towards their score on customer orientation.

Similarly, companies were asked whether they had rationalised their portfolios of products

The world-beaters of tomorrow

How can you tell if a company will be successful in the long term?
Tony Jackson analyses the secrets of longevity



or services, as a means of measuring their market strategy. Another specific question – whether companies operated in a common language – counted towards corporate culture.

At the same time, the questions had to be put to executives at various levels of seniority. For Professor Larréché, this is the chief answer to one obvious criticism of the study: that companies were asked to rate themselves.

The nearer the top of the company, it appears, the rosier the view of its performance. But it is very rare, Prof Larréché claims, for companies to delude themselves at lower levels of the organisation.

Take International Business Machines, he says, with which he was working when it ran into trouble some years ago. "The culture might have looked monolithic," he says, "but there was a lot of dissent internally."

The aim, in fact, is to conduct a kind of corporate intelligence

test. "The information is there in companies," Prof Larréché says. "There may also be illusion and political games, but you can correct for that."

So what are we to make of the findings? Can it really be true that Whitbread, viewed in the UK as solid but unremarkable, is better equipped to survive than Procter & Gamble?

On closer inspection, the picture is not clear-cut. Procter & Gamble ranks very high in the areas that one might expect: in its market strategy and market operations, and in its international reach. Whitbread ranks higher in organisation and systems, human resources and innovation.

Procter & Gamble also ranks low in customer orientation. This seems surprising, but not, Prof Larréché insists, to those within the company. "They have been so good at marketing," he says, "that sometimes they have not concentrated enough on the customer."

Their top management has been trying for several years to change that."

In oil and chemicals, the top company is W.R. Grace, ahead of Shell, DuPont and Monsanto. This might seem odd, given that W.R. Grace has recently undergone a palace revolution and the replacement of almost the entire board.

Again, though, the detail has some plausibility. W.R. Grace ranks low on mission and vision, and on human resources. But it more than compensates with a very high ranking for customer orientation and market operations. And indeed, Grace is a world leader in producing specialty chemicals for individual customers.

In spite of its apparent defects, the study has one unusual virtue: that of attempting to put US and European companies on a consistent footing. American readers are bound to suspect European bias, but the study claims to be

objective, which is more than can sometimes be said of US triumphalism.

Of the six sectors surveyed, US companies come top in four: in computers with Hewlett-Packard, in financial services with AIG, in oil and chemicals with W.R. Grace and in other services with DHL, the international courier.

Europeans come top in autos with BMW, and in consumer goods with Heineken. Both rankings are credible enough: although it is perhaps an unfortunate coincidence that Prof Larréché is Insead's Alfred H. Heineken professor of marketing.

As always with wide-ranging studies of this nature, there is fascination in less familiar names. In the electrical sector, who would have thought that Groupe SEB, the French maker of kitchen appliances, would come ahead of Emerson Electric? Or that for mission and vision, the Danish shipping company A.P. Moeller would emerge streets ahead of Shell and British Airways?

In general, the study is offered as a means of showing how the best companies go about their business, and allowing others to diagnose their shortcomings. Go back to IBM, Prof Larréché says. "There was a time when it was the best at customer orientation. If we had had this tool 20 years ago, we could have seen it going wrong."

The MECA Report on the Competitive Fitness of Global Firms. Insead, 77305 Fontainebleau Cedex, France.

Rank	Company
1	Heineken
2	Ford
3	W.R. Grace
4	JP Morgan
5	SGS-Thomson
6	Whitbread
7	Cisco Systems
8	CPC International
9	Emerson Electric
10	Danfoss
11	IBM
12	Procter & Gamble
13	Heinkel
14	British Telecom
15	Nestle
16	Xerox Corp.
17	Philip Morris
18	Philippe Electronics
19	Philip Morris
20	Philip Morris
21	Philip Morris
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Companies ranked by overall market effectiveness capability

Rank	Company
1	Heineken
2	Ford
3	W.R. Grace
4	JP Morgan
5	SGS-Thomson
6	Whitbread
7	Cisco Systems
8	CPC International
9	Emerson Electric
10	Danfoss
11	IBM
12	Procter & Gamble
13	Heinkel
14	British Telecom
15	Nestle
16	Xerox Corp.
17	Philip Morris
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My Secret Weapon Dick Brown: candour

The world has more bright than effective people



Dick Brown, aged 50, was appointed chief executive of Cable & Wireless, the telecommunications company, in May 1996. He was previously president of H&R Block, a Kansas City-based tax preparation company which also owns CompuServe, the online service provider.

My philosophy is that people inherently want to do a good job. That doesn't mean you have to be easy on people; you have to be fair with people. Management generally does not differentiate performance enough. I provide constructive, concise and candid feedback.

I do performance appraisals for 14 people. I use two blank pages for each. I say one is for the things you do well. The other, the things you do better. That is much harder to do than simply to check a box.

I rank my people. For example, I might say: 'If I step back and look at the relative contribution in your job that you have made compared with the other people that report to me, you rank in the third quartile.'

This is not an attempt to set people against each other – the reality of life is that everyone doesn't perform with equal effectiveness. It often happens that it spurs people on. They perform at levels they thought they would never achieve.

It is built on a foundation of trust and a spirit of constructiveness. While we might think we are doing someone a favour by avoiding an evaluation that might sting a bit, it actually makes it worse.

People would say that I give out very consistent messages. I encourage people to be agents of change, to take chances, to act with urgency, not to fit in.

It is hard for people to act with urgency if they are in a working environment where making mistakes leads to dismissal. Management must say that it is okay to make mistakes, just not to make the same mistakes over and over again. Another lesson is not to be seduced by things that are inaction in disguise, such as assessing, monitoring or evaluating alternatives.

The world has more bright people than effective people. I like people who are both, but if I had to choose between high intelligence and effective execution, I would take the effective execution all the time. It is not to disparage the need for creativity and foresight but unless it is translated into action it is just a dream.

Interview by Vanessa Houlder

blue-
Rawsthorn exp

Big boy

top play

What do my staff think of me – and do I want to know?

John W. Hunt Advises



training on that course.

From 180° surveys might be extended from your direct reports to include bosses and peers. So, in hierarchical terms, a complete circle of people – boss, peer, and subordinate, hence 360° – is surveyed anonymously. You would also complete the survey as a self-assessment to compare your results with those of the others.

One financial institution will probably never touch 360° feedback again. The outcome was shattering

Who the external consultant or business school has processed the data they are likely to compare your results with those of much larger samples of managers, in your industry, in the country, and so on. Only the aggregated results are fed back to you, so no one individual's responses are identifiable.

Some surveys use only ranked questions such as "how effective is this manager in building teams?" In answer, you select a point on a scale from "very effective" to "very ineffective". Others use a combination of ranked questions and of text questions in which respondents write, in their own words, responses to specific questions – for example, "how could this manager make your department more effective?"

Why do I say feedback like this is potentially lethal? There have been numerous examples where the trust that is essential to the success of this process has been violated. For example, managers who do not like their feedback conduct an inquisition by asking respondents to indicate which were their responses. If this happens, it is essential that the person handling the survey becomes involved immediately, confronts the manager and puts out a potential hush fire. Otherwise, the process of introducing a more open feedback of opinion can be set back for years.

I know of one financial institution that will probably never touch 360° feedback again after a consultant sold the top group the idea. His method was to interview the manager and each of his direct reports to find what they liked and disliked about each other. He then assembled that manager and his/her direct reports in one room and fed back verbatim what each had said about the other. The outcome was shattering.

I am often asked whether 360° feedback should be used to determine people's pay. More and more organisations are measuring the performance of individuals and groups against predetermined criteria. One obvious criterion for assessing managers should be managerial competence. The 360° degree survey could, it is argued, be used to provide measures of this competence.

But this simple logic breaks down

when objectives become muddled. Most 360° feedback is intended for personal development. Extending that objective to include an annual assessment of managerial competence as a basis for reward is risky. Managers will begin to manipulate the process by selecting only those people who will give them good results. We have even seen cases where it was clear that the managers had filled in all the questionnaires themselves.

A simple, short survey, used to establish a manager's "threshold" level of skills, could be built into the performance appraisal review to provide data for an annual assessment and for establishing rewards levels.

But anything more sophisticated and intended genuinely to help managers develop themselves should not be used for performance-related pay in this way, at least until the people involved are familiar with the process and trust has developed.

You are clearly worried that your managers might be demotivated by negative comments. It is true that people tend to remember the negative and ignore the positive feedback. But the fact is that in the 15 years that we have been using 360° feedback the vast majority of feedback on managers is positive. The reason for this is partly because total failures as managers are usually eliminated earlier in their careers and partly because respondents are revealing a great deal about themselves: who would want to be seen to be working for a gorilla indefinitely?

John W. Hunt is Professor of Organisational Behaviour at London Business School and a consultant to private and public sector clients. Please send suggestions for topics to be covered in this column to Diane Summers, Management Page Editor, fax 0171 873 3950, e-mail diane.summers@ft.com

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Blue-eyed marketing boy

Alice Rawsthorn explains how rebranding helped Texas gain a wider audience for its music

If anyone in the music business had been asked a year ago to predict the best-selling bands of 1997, they would doubtless have said Oasis, U2, the Prodigy and Spice Girls. Texas would not have figured.

A Glaswegian band formed in the late 1980s, Texas had an instant hit with *Southside*, their 1989 debut album, but mustered modest sales of the two follow-ups. Disillusioned, the band took a few years off before recording what threatened to be another commercial flop.

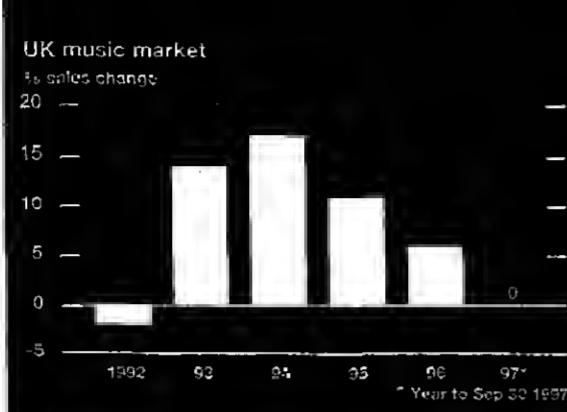
Instead, *White On Blonde* has sold 2m copies in Europe since its release in February and spawned a string of hit singles, including *Put Your Arms Around Me*, the snogging anthem for this year's Christmas office parties. Sharleen Spiteri, the lead singer, has been splashed across countless magazine covers. Texas is among the nominees for 1997's music awards, and their comeback is regarded as a marketing coup. How did they do it?

"Because of the music," says Howard Berman, managing director of Mercury Records (UK), the band's label. "It's all very well for us to sit here saying how clever we were, but *White On Blonde* has sold because it's a great album."

If *White On Blonde* had been weak, it is inconceivable that Mercury could have persuaded 2m people to buy it. But when a troubled band produces a strong album, there is always a risk of failure because no one has a chance to hear it - which is why marketing can make a difference.

When U2 prepared to release *Pop* this spring, and Oasis launched *Be Here Now*, they were guaranteed press profiles, reviews and extensive airplay, as were critical darlings like the Chemical Brothers and Radiohead.

Texas had none of these advantages. *Southside* had sold 1.6m copies worldwide, buoyed by the success of its first single, *I Don't Want A Lover*. None of the later singles did as well, and the next



Source: British Phonographic Industry

two albums - 1991's *Mother's Heaven* album and 1993's *Ricks Road* - each sold 600,000.

Sales were particularly poor in the UK, because Texas had failed to establish a loyal fan base in its home market. And although the albums received reasonable reviews, the band's catchy mix of pop, soul and rock was unfashionably accessible for the critics' taste.

"Texas had all the dangers of a band on a downward spiral," says Mr Berman. "Everyone was aware that if this album didn't work, they didn't really have a future."

He felt more confident in early 1996, when the band finished the first few tracks from *White On Blonde*, including *Say What You Want*, which was to be the first single. Originally, Mercury planned to release *White On Blonde* in August 1996, just before the scores of albums are rushed out for the fourth quarter, which is the busiest period of the music year and accounts for

40 per cent of annual sales. Superstars generally bring out albums in early autumn to make the most of the Christmas market. U2 had planned to launch *Pop* then, but postponed its release until spring for musical reasons and has probably forfeited sales as a result. However, Mercury was concerned that Texas would find hard to command the attention of journalists, disc jockeys and record retailers at such a competitive time.

The label was under pressure to strengthen its autumn release schedule from PolyGram, its parent company, which had already postponed several promising late 1996 albums, including *Pop*. Despite that, Mercury decided to hold *White On Blonde* until early February, a slack sales period when few albums are released and the market is less crowded.

The delay gave Texas time to finesse its promotional material, such as videos and

photographs. For the first three albums, the five band members had received equal prominence, but this time they decided to concentrate on Ms Spiteri, the only woman. "It was a collective decision," recalls Rab Andrews, their manager. "There's no real extrovert in the band; and the guys didn't have a problem."

Ms Spiteri, whose boyfriend, Ashley Heath, is a senior editor of *The Face* magazine, asked fashion photographer Juergen Teller to shoot the album and single covers. He asked Lee Swillingham and Stuart Spalding, both of whom work at *The Face*, to art direct his photographs like a magazine fashion session.

Mercury also used the delay to reintroduce Texas to journalists and record retailers at five "showcases" in different British cities where the band played their new songs. "Let's just say you've got to be very confident to let any artist do showcases," says Mr Berman. "But we knew Texas

were great live, and that they could carry it off." The showcases were well attended, and ensured that *Say What You Want* got plenty of airplay when released to radio in early December. "We chose that time because there's a lull when the Christmas hits have been out for a couple of weeks and the stations are getting tired of them," says Mr Berman.

Until then, Savage & Best, the public relations consultancy hired to promote the album, had little luck in persuading newspapers and magazines to run articles on Texas. Similarly, Mercury's sales team was finding it hard to interest retailers in the album.

Retailers became more enthusiastic when *Say What You Want* climbed the radio airplay chart, and then became a Top 10 single. "We were literally getting more orders every day," says Mr Berman. In early February, when *White On Blonde* went on sale, it entered the chart at number one.

The album has stayed in the Top 30 ever since. Its success, and that of three more singles, has stimulated media interest in the band, and in Ms Spiteri in particular.

Texas had decided not to tour until this winter and to concentrate on promoting the album in Europe before launching it in the US, leaving them free for press interviews and television appearances. Most acts are bombarded by publicity when their albums come out, leaving the media with little to say about them, but Texas has benefited from steady coverage throughout the year.

Whether by accident or design, Juergen Teller's photography has helped to broaden the band's appeal. Just as fashion magazines often run editorial features on Richard Avedon's advertising campaigns for Gianni Versace, they have devoted plenty of space to Mr Teller's shots of Texas's Prada-clad lead singer.

The images also struck a chord with the affluent 25 to 40 year olds, who are a lucrative market for record companies, and are notoriously difficult to attract because they seldom visit record shops or read music magazines.

Such consumers are more familiar with the stylised look of Versace and Prada advertising than with youth-oriented music graphics.

By adopting the visual imagery of a hip fashion label, the late 20-something musicians in Texas have cracked that market.

Mercury originally hoped that *White On Blonde* would stay on sale until late summer, but the album is still in the Top 10 as the music industry enters the Christmas 1997 sales season. When Texas starts its US tour next year, it will arrive there as a European success story.

"This is one of those rare examples of the right hand making the right album at the right time," says Mr Berman. "We could have done exactly the same things with a different album, and it might have flopped."

Winston Fletcher It's creative - but will it sell?

Measuring creativity in advertising can be difficult

Are Dixons' advertisements better than Levi's? Ads for Dixons, the UK electronics retailer, are traditionally crowded, seemingly messy retail spaces in humdrum black and white print; Levi's commercials are imaginative award-winning filmlets, with great sound and subtle colour. How can I be so philistine as to suggest they are comparable?

But surely aesthetics are less important than sales results in advertising. The protagonists of creativity point to prize-winning creative campaigns that have, in sales terms, done the business (Levi's, for example). The critics point to an equal number of competent but uninspired campaigns that have likewise done the business (Dixons, for example).

Every advertisement has some effect, but to produce a linear chart, which even approximately relates greater creativity with greater sales, it would be necessary to quantify the results with precision and to isolate the creativity from the other factors such as timing and activity by rivals.

But that does not mean creativity has no value.

There is copious evidence to show that consumers generally recognise and appreciate creative and original advertisements and dislike boring and unoriginal ones. But the content and creativity of the advertising must be relevant to the product: consumers quickly spot and condemn irrelevant creativity that has been shoe-horned in.

There is another, less directly commercial reason for producing advertising that is creative. Advertisements, like most human artefacts, have both form and function. Just as chairs have to be comfortable, advertisements have to sell goods. It would be ridiculous to claim that all comfortable chairs are beautiful. Many exceptionally comfortable chairs are hideous. And some beautiful chairs are uncomfortable. But the best chairs are both comfortable and beautiful. The same is true of advertisements. Uncreative ads can work, creative ads can fail. The best advertisements are creative ads that work. So I prefer Levi's advertising but that doesn't mean that Dixons' ads don't sell.

The author is chairman of Bassell UK Group.

Big boys missing the Point

Fledgling internet news service looks set for rich pickings

David Dorman's recent decision to leave his lofty position as number two at SBC, a telecommunications company with \$35bn (£15bn) in revenues, to head PointCast, a fledgling internet news service, has raised some eyebrows. But Mr Dorman is convinced that PointCast, which he joined in October, is well positioned to take advantage of the internet's growth - what he calls "one of the biggest business opportunities of the century... The television and newspaper industries got \$35bn each in advertising revenue last year. Even if the internet got just a fraction of that business, the potential would be enormous."

According to Forrester Research, which tracks the internet, the world wide web garnered about \$250m in advertising in the US last year.

Next year, this is expected nearly to double. And by 2000, says the investment bank Morgan Stanley, there will be 300m personal computers in the US, more than half connected to the internet. "That means we'll have 1.49m

potential customers out there within the next three years," says Mr Dorman, compared with the 1m viewers PointCast now reaches.

While PointCast is little more than a start-up, it has attracted attention for its novel approach to news and advertising on the internet. Its news service appears automatically when computers move into "screen saver", an energy-conserving mode that kicks in when the machine has been idle for more than a few minutes. The viewer is fed a mix of news flashes and advertising, in a quasi-television fashion.

Clicking on an advertisement transfers viewers to a web site offering additional information, often allowing the viewer to make a purchase. "The formula has a tremendous advantage over television, because you can squeeze the old sales cycle of awareness, then consideration, then sale, down to a few minutes," says Mr Dorman. "It's a cycle that once took weeks or months."

PointCast subscribers are also given the option of tailoring their news feed. Mr Dorman plans to take this service

even further, toward what he calls "mass customisation".

A new PointCast service will tell viewers the value of their personal stock investment portfolio using real-time prices. Subscribers can also dictate the industries, geographic regions and hobbies they most want to follow.

Outside content providers furnish most of the information. Deals have been signed with CNN, the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times.

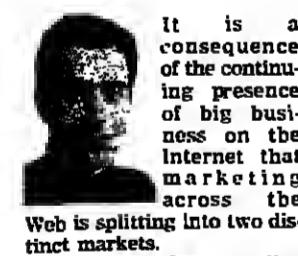
Personalised news services are often criticised for over-filtering the news, with readers complaining that they cannot know in advance which stories they will be interested in reading.

"We can always include the most important pieces in the headlines, regardless of the subscriber's profile," says Mr Dorman. "But let's face it: if you live in San Francisco, you probably won't be too interested in the weather forecast for Montreal. Picking out the most personally relevant bits of information is a huge service to readers."

Victoria Griffith

Tim Jackson • On the Web

Top players in a minor league



It is a consequence of the continuing presence of big business on the Internet that marketing across the Web is splitting into two distinct markets.

In the major leagues, online services and search engines like AOL and Yahoo sign long-term, multi-million-dollar deals with prominent electronic commerce companies like Amazon.

In the minor leagues, tens of thousands of little businesses buy in banner ads at a fixed price per thousand impressions, or simply exchange links with other web sites on a reciprocal basis.

Dozens of businesses have been set up to add liquidity to this minor-league market. Among them, two prominent players are DoubleClick, which resells ads on behalf of thousands of web sites, and Link Exchange, which operates a centralized banner system allowing site owners to place ads on other sites in return for placing ads on their own.

The result is a transparent

and much more efficient market.

Bru Younker, CEO of Submit It!, which markets an automatic search-engine submission service, ClickTrade incorporates two important innovations.

First, it allows links from one site to another not only through banner ads but also through buttons and plain text. That makes commercial sense because of the weight of data showing that web users pay more attention to standard links than banners.

Second, ClickTrade is based on "clickthroughs", not "impressions". The ClickTrade advertiser pays only when user clicks on the link.

The system is simple to operate. Both advertisers and "link partners", as the company calls web sites that take money for forwarding web users to other sites, can sign up instantly over the web. Advertisers post a price that they are willing to pay per click, and link partners look at the different prices offered by different advertisers before deciding whom to work with.

That may be acceptable to US sites, but it is unlikely to work with link partners outside the US.

FTid - The Internet Directory

Internet Directory

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BUSINESS EDUCATION

Not the best place to start

Jens Tartler charts the move to revive entrepreneurship in Germany's business schools

Germany, burdened with 4.5m unemployed, desperately needs new jobs and new businesses. But ironically, in the country which has always been proud of its "Mittelstand" - small and medium-sized, often family-owned companies - there is a severe shortage of entrepreneurs.

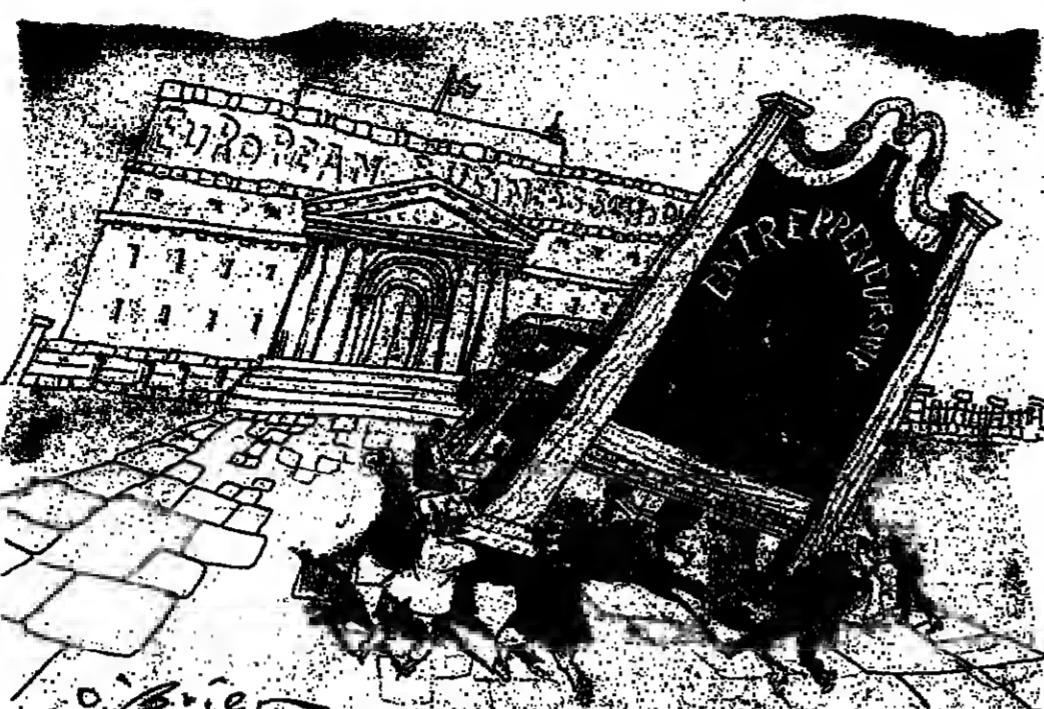
Today only nine per cent of the German workforce is self-employed; 20 years ago every fifth person was running his or her own business.

Moreover, half the graduates from Germany's universities want a job in the public sector, and only 10 per cent want to start their own business. Claudia Sturm, who runs a building company near Heidelberg, complains: "Studying business administration in Germany prepares you for a job with a multinational but not for starting your own company."

At German universities, there has not been one single chair in entrepreneurship, so far. This will soon change.

At the private-run European Business School (ebs), in Oestrich-Winkel near Frankfurt, students can now choose entrepreneurship as a special course. Heinz Klandt, who is well-known for his work in this area even among academics in the US, is the first German professor in entrepreneurship and has moved from the university of Dortmund to take up the position at ebs.

Jacob de Smits, the Dutch rector (or dean) of ebs, holds that the lectures in entrepreneurship will reflect the everyday problems of starting a business. The programme will include case studies,



developing a business plan, managing finance and acquiring venture capital and launching marketing campaigns on a low budget.

Additionally, academics are setting up research projects in the area, says Mr de Smits: "We are interested in fast-growing companies like Virgin or the Body Shop."

At the state-run universities in Cologne and Mannheim, assistant professors are now preparing the foundations for chairs in entrepreneurship. Other universities set to

follow suit are Humboldt university in the eastern part of Berlin, Dresden and Magdeburg.

But the numbers are still small. In the US 370 universities are teaching entrepreneurship and in the UK Aberdeen, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Warwick are just a few of the schools which specialise in the subject. In London Sue Birley is professor of entrepreneurship at the Management School at Imperial College and London Business School is aiming

to fund such a chair next year. To finance the schemes at the German universities there is a start-up fund provided by Deutsche Ausgleichsbank, the federal government bank which is more used to supporting start-up businesses. Once those funds are exhausted universities will have to shift resources from other departments or raise funds from sponsors to finance the new chairs.

A good model could be the privately-run university at Witten-

Herdecke, Northrhine-Westfalia, which has established an institute with three chairs for research on family businesses. The institute is funded by Deutsche Bank.

Eckart von Reden, chairman of Deutsche Ausgleichsbank, has a more fundamental aim. "We want to draw the attention of business and politics to entrepreneurship, because more and more people have to be self-employed, especially in the service sector. In a globalised economy, starting your own business should become an example to follow for the younger generation."

But in Germany it is difficult. Even Bill Gates, it is said, would have failed to overcome all the obstacles Germany imposes on young entrepreneurs.

First of all, he would not have been allowed to do his business in a garage, because there are strict rules on what kind of activities are permitted in which areas of cities. Additionally, German bureaucrats set high standards for the technical requirements of buildings and offices as well as for, say, the required number of toilets.

Young entrepreneur Ms Sturm points out: "Last week I had a man from the building authority in my backyard. He checked whether I have got at least seven meters space for cars to turn." When Ms Sturm moved her business she had to wait a full year for permission to set up a new building.

Ralf Mahron, a young entrepreneur from Ludwigshafen, had to wait as long to get his company "Far Eastern Limited" registered. The chamber of industry and commerce did not want to accept the "exotic name".

How-to course for can-do types

Entrepreneurs are often too busy making things happen to take time to discuss business issues.

Up to 100 of them will be invited to join the Business Leadership Forum which has been set up by the Instituto de Empresa.

Regular meetings will be held in Madrid with a succession of speakers.

Paul Krugman, professor of economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology will be the speaker in January.

IE E-Mail: Santiago.Iague@ie.ucm.es

Honour for BA chief

Sir Colin Marshall, chairman of British Airways and chairman of the UK's Confederation of British Industry, received an honorary doctorate at Lancaster university's degree congregation last week.

The award is partly in recognition of BA's long-standing collaboration with the management school at Lancaster.

Lancaster: www.lancs.ac.uk/manschool

Tell tales out of school

Did you have luxury five-star accommodation or was it a camp bed in a cupboard?

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Delta Bradshaw



Coming home: John Quelch at the LBS

LBS acquires an American accent

With a strong US accent and an employment record which speaks only of US business schools, John Quelch is not the typical British academic. But in six months he will return to his home town to take over as principal at the London business school.

As head of the marketing unit at Harvard business school, Prof Quelch specialises in international marketing and was one of the first to introduce ethics into discussions on the subject. He also produced one of the first electronic case studies, on marketing at Intel,

while the rest of the Harvard faculty were still wrestling with paper and ink.

At LBS he has set himself three priorities: motivating the faculty and staff; motivating the alumni; and fund-raising.

Motivating the staff could well prove the most difficult. Prof Quelch had to beat three internal LBS candidates: David Currie (Lord Currie of Marylebone) and the two deputy principals, Michael Earl and Tom Robertson. "It would be wonderful if all three could stay fully committed," he comments.

He is bullish about LBS prospects: "I think the institution is poised to enter the arena of the

highest-rated international business schools."

Prof Quelch is reluctant to discuss changes he plans to make, although promotion of the school's international research is high on his list. As to the US-modelled two-year MBA course Prof Quelch has no plans for change. "The 21-month MBA programme does have the advantage of delivering a quality of graduate that it is difficult for a 12-month programme to match," he concludes.

He is bullish about LBS prospects: "I think the institution is poised to enter the arena of the

Travel Update · Roger Bray

E-mail enterprise

Staff at Siemens Nixdorf, the German manufacturing and information technology group, have begun making their own business travel bookings by e-mail. If they try to infringe company policy an alert is passed immediately to their travel manager, Michael Bussmann, the firm's information systems sales manager, expects they will arrange most simple trips themselves - such as domestic flights - but that the majority will still need expert help with the most complex itineraries. He

believes the development can halve the average DM35 cost of processing bookings. Employees can check flight or hotel availability from their computers via a reservation system link. Bookings are routed to one of seven travel agents, depending on where they work. The idea is being tested on 5,000 staff at six locations but could eventually be used by more than 200,000.

Air delays

Air travel delays continue to worsen. In the

July-September quarter, 21.3 per cent of flights were more than 15 minutes late, up from 18.4 per cent in the same period last year.

About two-thirds of hold-ups were blamed on air traffic congestion or airport problems. The figures, which come from the Association of European Airlines, hide an even gloomier picture. They relate only to the time the aircraft leaves its stand and do not include any delays between there and take-off.

The AEA represents most of the region's main carriers.

September was the fifth consecutive month in which their average punctuality deteriorated. It says this

year's punctuality record now looks likely to be the poorest since 1990.

Conference call

Boston, which has been losing lucrative convention business for want of capacity, is to get a huge US\$700m conference and exhibition complex.

Scheduled to open in 2002, it

will have total space for 12,000 delegates - three times that of the city's largest existing facility, the Hynes Convention Centre. It will be built close to the waterfront and the new tunnel to Logan Airport. A small complex, with capacity for 100 people,

has just opened at the Fish Pier on the harbour. But a spokesman for the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau says: "We have lost every major conference for the last five years because they have outgrown our ability to handle them."

Boxing lesson

Any thieves contemplating a pilfering expedition to Beijing's Radisson SAS hotel had better know how to dance like butterflies and sting like bees. Anxious to tighten safety and security, the management recently called in soldiers from the capital's Fire Control

Bureau to instruct them in Chinese boxing.

Tel Aviv hotel

Tel Aviv is to get a hotel targeted at long-stay business visitors. Part of the Israel group, which is well established in the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat, it will comprise 90

one-bedroom suites with kitchens. There will be no restaurant, but guests will be able to order breakfast and use a grocery shopping service. The hotel, to open in February, will occupy the top 16 floors of a building two blocks from the beach and incorporate a business centre.

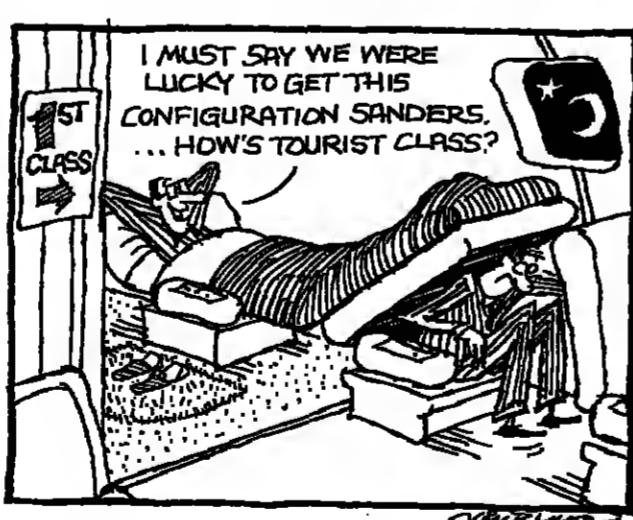
Likely weather in the leading business centres

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Hong Kong	18°	15°	16°	15°	15°
Frankfurt	5°	8°	5°	5°	5°
Los Angeles	16°	18°	21°	20°	21°
Paris	9°	10°	10°	6°	6°

CLUB CLASS

Gillian Upton on airlines' response to the main requirement of executives - sleep

My kingdom for an 'air' bed



ed's fleet of 777s that fly the UK-US routes. "We want to do something above and beyond what everyone is doing at the moment," the airline says.

Qantas is in no doubt about how it sees the future of its premium cabin. "We want a product that is complementary to our alliance partner [British Airways] but not identical," says Mark Henry, corporate sales manager for UK and Ireland at the Australian airline.

Together with Air France, BA was the first to bring back beds to first class 18 months ago. It introduced individual booths slightly angled towards the windows. In the centre of the cabin are two rows of two seats, with partitions. They have been likened to a coffin shape and hence the cabin is better known as Coffin Class in the industry. BA gives out sleep suits and duvets.

At the same time Air France brought in L'Espace 160, seats that fully recline with a sliding partition for privacy. The cabin has seats alongside each other; a duvet, pillows and sleep suit are part of the package.

Qantas will almost certainly go for sleeper seats with some type of partition, and more individual seats rather than pairs of seats. A

refit begins next year and the airline hopes customers will be able to sample its new first class by April. Last month it introduced a dedicated first class cabin crew.

Most of the airlines have complemented the new seats with more flexible eating arrange-

ments. Customers can choose to eat in the departure lounge before boarding or "graze" in-flight. This trend has not stopped airlines competing for leading chefs to add something extra. Qantas, for example, has won top Australian chef Neil Perry to create an à la carte menu. Air New Zealand is using Peter Gordon from London restaurant The Sugar Club.

The new top cabins aim to increase the quality differential between first and business class. As business class cabins were upgraded in the early 1990s, many customers found it questionable to pay almost twice as much for a first-class ticket for which they got slightly more leg room and, perhaps, a better meal.

Sleep, though, is a precious commodity for which many executives are apparently prepared to pay significantly extra. A London-New York return on BA in business class, for instance, costs £2,814, while a first-class ticket is £4,800.

For the airline, making first-class travel more attractive makes sense. "If an airline can get a full cabin in first class they will make a third of the total revenue. In economy class," says Chris Tarry, transport analyst with Dresdner Kleinwort Benson. (This equation assumes discounted economy-class fares, full fare first-class fares and 60 per cent and 80 per cent load factor respectively.)

But the fortunes of first class

have been volatile, prompting some airlines to give up on first class altogether. In the early 1990s the Gulf war and recession emptied first-class cabins, save for passenger upgrades and members of frequent flyer programmes. KLM, Sabena and Continental either scrapped first class entirely or combined it with their business class.

KLM has no plans to bring back first class. "We abolished it in 1993 and upgraded business [class] in April the following year," says KLM. "We've had to add more seats to cope with demand but our business class can be compared with some other airlines' first class. We don't have any plans to market a seat like bed."

Similarly, Continental, which combined its two premium cabins into a BusinessFirst product in 1992, has no plans to return to a three-class airline.

Scandinavian airline SAS scrapped first class in the 1990s but has responded to market demand with the introduction a few years ago of a EuroSleeper seat on long-haul routes. Charged at a \$300 (£179) premium one-way, there are six reclining seats on each flight. They have to be booked in advance.

"When you're travelling long-haul all you want to do is get a good night's sleep," says Jeff Rebello, marketing manager of SAS. "Travellers don't want anything to eat. You have to question whether you actually see the value of paying \$179 extra money for first class."

On the rack over rooms

Companies risk big increases in business travel costs unless they negotiate new deals with hotel groups, according to the latest quarterly European Business Travel Index published by American Express.

As demand for rooms in many cities edges close to supply, corporate rates look certain to come under heavy pressure.

Travel managers should insist on a "last room availability clause" to ensure they continue to get agreed prices even when hotels have only a few beds left, advises Börje Elgård, Amex hotel relations vice-president for Europe. If they do not, they will face an increasing danger that discounted bookings will be rejected as it becomes easier to sell remaining rooms at, or close to, published "rack" rates.

Prices have soared in many countries, not least in North America, where the cost of staying in top quality hotels rose by just over one-fifth in the year to the end of September. Amex measures rates in Ecuus, so UK business travellers will have suffered less than their counterparts in countries whose currencies have been struggling.

Increases in some places have been so steep that not even those blessed with hard currency have been left unsold. In the US there was no escape even for travellers trading down. North American tourist hotel rates rose by no less than 37 per cent in central and south America, the pound's strength adds nearly 20 per cent.

There is some relief from the gloom. The weakening of Asian currencies has cut costs for travellers. A drop in visitors to Hong Kong, following the handover to Chinese rule, has created a buyer's market there.

Prices in Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt have also fallen. They have even flattened in Bombay, but only after a 25 per cent rise in US dollar terms last winter.

And the imposition of stiff new air travel taxes is already beginning to hit foreign tourism to the US, which could force hoteliers to offer more attractive deals.

Roger Bray

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MUSIC<br

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

Philip Stephens

Hints and signals

Tony Blair and the Northern Ireland secretary are acting on the assumption there is a chance of peace in Ulster

The intriguing question arising from Tony Blair's meeting with Gerry Adams this week is just which of them is taking the bigger risk. Some say the British prime minister has been duped by the leader of Irish republicanism. Others venture Mr Adams is tempting a nasty fate. The IRA has a habit of being unforgiving of those who consort with the enemy.

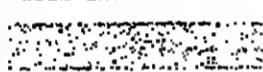
Mr Adams will be the first republican leader to cross the threshold of 10 Downing Street since Michael Collins in 1921. Collins was there to make peace with David Lloyd George at the end of the Anglo-Irish war. The hero of Ireland's struggle for independence was outwitted by his host, signing a treaty which, in its creation of the Irish Free State, entrenched the partition of Ireland.

Collins was aware of the perils. On his arrival back in Dublin his first words to Tom Cullen, his intelligence agent, were: "Tom, what are our fellows saying?" Cullen answered that what was good enough for Collins was good enough for republicanism. He was mistaken. Collins was branded a traitor by Eamon De Valera's anti-treaty forces. Within a year, Collins had been murdered in an ambush by his erstwhile followers.

Seventy-five years on, we do not know whether Mr Adams is serious in seeking a settlement in the all-party talks in Belfast. And, if he is, whether what is good enough for the president of Sinn Féin is good enough for his supporters.

We do know, though, that, just as in 1921, the only deal on offer through negotiations falls far short of a united Ireland. Collins saw the Irish Free State as a "first step", offering republicans "the freedom to achieve freedom". Does Mr Adams intend to say the same, one wonders, of a new

Mo Mowlam's approach – as gutsy as it is rough-edged – has flushed out the protagonists from their rhetorical bomb shelters



constitutional settlement? Mr Blair has no illusions about his visitors. There is not even the flimsiest pretence these days that Sinn Féin and the IRA are distinguishable, even though membership of the latter is technically illegal. When the BBC reported last week that Mr Adams and his side-kick, Martin McGuinness, were members of the IRA's Army Council, the official reaction was a shrug of the shoulders. The report told Mr Blair what he already knew. Mr Adams has blood on his hands. But then so do the loyalist leaders who have already been welcomed in 10 Downing Street.

As to Mr Adams' intentions, Mr Blair has made what John Major, his predecessor, once called a "working assumption" that the IRA's leadership is serious in its intent to find a political solution. The prime minister will tell you that there are signs, no more than that, that the Sinn Féin leadership does want to make the journey from violence to politics. There are hints too, he believes, that they are preparing the ground to present an eventual agreement at the talks as a "transition phase" on the road to a united Ireland.

Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland secretary, takes the same view. Many had hoped that she would be able to move over to the hardline Contingency Army Council. The CAC's operations, along with those of the loyalist LVF, are the big obstacle to a faster relaxation of security in the province.

Some inside the British security forces are sceptical. The IRA retains a formidable capacity to strike both in Northern Ireland and on the British mainland. Mr Blair and Ms Mowlam probably would not know they intended to do so until after it had happened. As Mr Adams infamously declared during the first ceasefire: "They [the IRA] haven't gone away, you know."

Mr Blair is prepared to take the risk. Once he had decided to treat Sinn Féin/IRA as serious negotiators?

he could hardly excuse himself from Mr Adams' handshake. And the Belfast talks have gone better than expected. The unsung hero is George Mitchell. The former US senator has given two years of his life to chairing the process. His patience is unrivalled.

True, the parties are only now beginning to confront the substantive issues that will shape any settlement. The elements, though, are familiar enough: recognition that the majority holds a veto over Northern Ireland's constitutional position; a devolved assembly in Belfast; safeguards for the nationalist minority; north-south structures to enhance co-operation; and a new framework for Anglo-Irish relations.

That David Trimble, the leader of the Ulster Unionists, is still at the negotiating table says something encouraging. One view says he is cynically guarding his flank against being blamed for a return to violence. Another says he sees a slim possibility of a deal. In that event, Mr Trimble, of course, would be a natural choice as Ulster's first prime minister since the early 1970s.

Herein, though, lies the core contradiction, the circle to be squared. Any settlement must persuade unionists that it modernises partition rather than destroys it. For Republicans, it must be susceptible to the interpretation that it is a step towards a united Ireland. Thus one side demands immovability, the other mobility. And Northern Ireland is a small place.

With sufficient imagination, it is just possible to see how an agreement might nod simultaneously in both directions. But Mr Adams has yet to be tested. The IRA ceasefire is a tactical convenience. We will know when he asks: "What are our fellows saying?"

Mr Blair is prepared to take the risk. Once he had decided to treat Sinn Féin/IRA as serious negotiators?

The International Monetary Fund's plans for a \$57bn bail-out of South Korea would require a huge transformation of the economy, perhaps by as much as those of east Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Just as East Germany was once considered the most advanced of the east European communist bloc countries, so Korea, the 11th largest economy in the world, was celebrated as the most robust of Asia's tiger economies. Its largest conglomerates, the *chaebol*, include household names such as Hyundai and Samsung. Yet the country's *diktat* economy, based on state directives to banks and industry, is no longer working.

Korea is East Germany with modern machinery and US dollar-denominated debt," says David Hale, global strategist for the Zurich Group, the financial services company. "It's the last of the transitional economies to market capitalism."

A senior western diplomat in Seoul says: "Korea had grown too big for bureaucrats to allocate capital and pick industrial winners."

The collapse of several industrial groups this year threatened the stability of the banking sector and caused foreign bankers to curb lending. This raised the spectre of overseas loan defaults, as Korea's foreign exchange reserves dwindled to a dangerously low level.

The scope of the IMF reforms is wide. The plan is to free the financial sector from intrusive state control while forcing the *chaebol* to make investments based on earnings potential rather than market share.

By giving independence to the central bank, the IMF reformers hope to reduce the overarching influence of the finance ministry. A wider opening of the debt and equity markets to foreign investors is intended to stimulate competition and promote a much-needed emphasis on credit analysis.

And the planned closure of some financial institutions, and the merger of others, would liquidate at least \$50bn in bad loans and curb borrowing estimated by Standard & Poor's, the US credit rating agency, to be twice the gross domestic product of \$500bn.

All this would transform

Painful prospect

John Burton explains the effects the IMF-led reforms will have on South Korea



A South Korean protest at the IMF package Picture: Reuters

alisation lead to mass redundancies. Unemployment is likely to rise from its present level of 2.4 per cent to at least 5 per cent.

The IMF is pushing for the reform of rigid labour laws to make it easier to sack workers, who have grown up with lifetime employment guarantees. If serious social tension is to be avoided, labour reforms will have to be matched by improvements to the meagre unemployment insurance scheme.

"It is the workers, not the government officials or corporate leaders responsible for our economic crisis, who will have to bear the brunt of any IMF measures," says Yoon Young-mo, international secretary for the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

Chaebo officials are also angry. They claim to detect a conspiracy by the US and Japan to use the IMF reforms to weaken their international competitiveness. Reforms would also deprive bureaucrats of their considerable economic powers, with a resulting loss of social status.

Korea's next president, due to be elected on December 18, will probably be

forced to preside over the worst economic downturn in decades as a result of the IMF agreement. The two leading candidates both criticise the package as they appeal to populist sentiment among voters.

The prospect of political protests and social unrest could expose what is considered the fatal flaw in the IMF's conditions: the lack of a detailed schedule for implementing reforms. "The Koreans are relentless in pursuing their policy goals. Even if you think you have an agreement, you don't," says the western diplomat.

Analysts expect renewed haggling during the next few months over the progress of the reforms, a process that will be complicated by this month's elections.

That could further undermine foreign investors' confidence. "Korea is going to get smacked again if it shows a lack of understanding and commitment to the IMF package," says a US investment bank official.

"The markets have focused on the things you can't fix overnight and the mood is already deeply pessimistic about Korea's structural problems."

There are suggestions that Korea might try to avoid the most painful parts of reform by playing for time. "If the *chaebol* cut investments and generate enough cash flow, they could quickly reduce their debt levels," says Daniel Harwood, north-east Asia manager for ABN Amro Heare Govett.

But foreign bankers believe Korean banks and conglomerates will have difficulty raising new capital if the pace of reforms slows. "Short-term lending will probably not be affected now that the IMF has arrived, but I doubt whether lending by foreign banks will be increased," says a UK banker. "The Korean banks still don't appreciate the fundamental economic problems. I find this frightening."

Richard Samuelson, branch manager for SBC Warburg Dillon Reed in Seoul, predicts that Korea may suffer another debt crisis in the first months of next year. "The problem with the IMF is that it is offering a macro-economic solution to what is essentially a micro-economic problem – Korea's uncompetitive banks and businesses."

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Value for money needed in audit costs

From Mr Brian R. Disbury.

Sir, You are right – the International Monetary Fund's \$57bn bail-out of South Korean investors should make us all feel queasy ("Korea's rescue", December 4). We at the Jubilee 2000 Coalition feel particularly queasy. The IMF has failed, so far, to find \$5.08bn to help write off debts of the poorest countries.

Of greater concern, however, is the moral hazard implied by the IMF's bail-out of what you correctly describe as "every idiot who has lent short term to fund long-term investment".

The IMF's bail-outs of Thailand, Indonesia and Korea highlight the inherent

hazards of an international financial system in which neither the market, nor an international insolvency procedure, imposes discipline on creditors. Instead, they enjoy protection from market forces by bodies like the IMF and World Bank. This leads, as the IMF's Stanley Fischer admitted in Hong Kong, to increased moral hazard in lending, and to riskless decision-making.

At the heart of the western banking system is the precondition that economic decisions must also carry financial risks. Where the link between economic decisions and risk is severed, we are told, economic efficiency is endangered. This happened in the former communist economies, and the IMF has been anxious to discourage such economic inefficiency.

Why is it, therefore, defending economic inefficiency in western financial markets by protecting reckless, compulsive creditors? Is it not time to review the absence of legal or market disciplines on international creditors, and to argue for fairness, and therefore economic efficiency, in relations between debtors and creditors?

Ann Pettifor, director, Jubilee 2000 Coalition, PO Box 100, London SE1 7RT, UK

care, and it is definitely not the banks or the unsecured and unsuspecting creditors, to whom it is determined (for what reason I know not) that they have no duty at all!

I say again (and perhaps those that matter might listen this time) that plough should not pay more than £1,000 per annum for their audits unless they can be certain that they are getting real value for money.

Brian R. Disbury, 16 Metchley Park Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2PG, UK

Dangerous enough to tax

From Mr Chris Hale.

Sir, Presumably now that beef has become such a threat to the health of society, the UK government can now tax it along with alcohol and tobacco and use it as a source of revenue. Maybe the National Farmers' Union should be considering sponsorship of sporting events?

Chris Hale, Napier Richards, The Wheathouse, Bonds Mill Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, UK

From Mr Paul Walter.

Sir, The UK government has banned beef on the bone to avoid the faint possibility of a few deaths per year. Will it now ban cigarettes to save well over 100,000 lives a year?

Paul Walter, "Ronald", East Fields, 12 Stanley Road, Newbury RG14 7PB, UK

Invest in the brand

From Mr George Collie.

Sir, The question of how to exploit a potentially great international brand, Liberty, currently incarcerated in a dilapidated though charming prison premises in London's Regent Street, seems to have been missed (Lex: "Liberty", December 2).

A large part of the £43m which the current board plans to invest in "bricks and mortar" might be better allocated to more vigorous brand development. Instead, by choosing to be followers of fashion and making the store a Harvey Nichols clone, the board is not only betting the company but ignoring its most valuable asset – the Liberty brand.

George Collie, 10 Cromwell Grove, London W6 7RG, UK

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FINANCIAL TIMES

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Monday December 8 1997

WTO rules, okay?

The dismissal by a World Trade Organisation disputes panel of US and European Union complaints that Japan has discriminated against photographic imports is a forthright affirmation of judicial independence. The panel's judgment was clearly unswayed by fear of displeasing the WTO's two most powerful members. Such impartiality is commendable. But it also puts the institution's authority squarely to the test.

Politically, the ruling could hardly come at a worse time. The outrage it has provoked in the US can only make harder President Bill Clinton's task of obtaining fast-track trade negotiating authority from Congress. The decision also risks eroding further US support for multilateralism and encouraging demands for a reversal to strong-arm trade tactics towards Japan, based on threats to penalise its exports.

Such a reaction would ill serve US interests. As the most active petitioners of WTO disputes panels, and winner of every case it has brought until now, the US has nothing to gain by calling the system into question. Least of all at a time when it is insisting that important WTO rulings against the EU's banana regime and beef import ban be rigorously enforced. Equally, as Mr Clinton's advisers are keenly aware, taking a sledgehammer to Japan's trade

practices could damage its fragile attempts to restore financial stability and economic growth.

The photofilm judgment is in any case only preliminary and may be appealed. But weaknesses in its WTO case suggest the US should not bank on a reversal. Not only have some Japanese restrictions it cites been amended. A more fundamental problem is that the US is invoking trade law against practices and regulations that many experts consider to be matters for anti-trust scrutiny.

Yet Washington has so far resisted moves to extend the WTO's jurisdiction to cover competition policy. It needs to rethink its position. It would be perverse to accuse the WTO of not tackling alleged barriers to competition in other countries' markets, while denying the organisation the tools required to deal with them.

While the world needs to guard against hasty overreaction to the photofilm judgment, Japan should not seize on it as a pretext to relax efforts to deregulate its economy. That would make it harder for Mr Clinton to contain pressures in the US to hit back at Japan. Yet more important, it would delay still further measures that are vital to economic recovery. Winning one small victory in Geneva is no reason for Japan to abandon the much bigger struggle at home.

Anwar's move

The economic austerity package announced by Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's deputy prime minister and finance minister, amounts to the most significant step in the right direction since the country was caught in the Asian currency turmoil last July. It brings belated recognition of the inevitable slowdown in growth, and radical action to curb government spending – to be cut by at least 18 per cent next year. It is also a political gamble for Mr Anwar.

Mahathir Mohamad, the prime minister, has given a decidedly lukewarm endorsement of the measures. No wonder. They represent a radical change from his rhetoric of recent months, which seemed to blame everyone except his own government and business associates for the crisis. Mr Anwar even contradicted a statement his premier made only one day before that the \$3bn bridge across the Malay peninsula to Thailand would still be built. Now it is to be delayed indefinitely.

The realisation that the Malaysian economy must slow down is welcome, although a downward revision from 8 to 7.5 per cent in 1997, and a forecast of 4 to 5 per cent growth next year, may still prove optimistic. Perhaps more important, however, in terms of putting the economy back on a sound foundation, is Mr Anwar's

announcement that he will not bail out any more insolvent banks or businesses, even the politically well-connected. That could set him on a collision course with the prime minister.

The immediate reaction of the markets to Friday's package was positive, but the stock exchange could suffer from the consequences. This is going to be a very painful austerity package if carried out as intended. Mr Anwar has also given the banks a green light to call in stock market investors' debts from margin borrowing. That has been a widespread practice underpinning share prices.

Dr Mahathir's response is critical. The package has the approval of the cabinet, but the prime minister could overrule it with his National Economic Action Council, a body he has promised to create with sweeping emergency powers. There appears to be a struggle for power between the prime minister and his deputy.

Mr Anwar's reforms are essential and overdue, and supported by many important financial institutions. Dr Mahathir has seemed increasingly out of touch with reality. But he is a committed political operator. Malaysia's success owes much to his past political direction. Its recovery will now depend on his willingness to accept the reforms, and put the economy back on a firm footing.

Beef wars

Consider the scene: a group of factory workers whose jobs are threatened by the high pound attack a Bank of England bullion van. In full view of the police they tip it into the Thames.

They claim that the gold is artificially cheap and might be used to prop up sterling. They demand a cut in interest rates. The police say that, if much more gold goes into the Thames, they might have to take the matter seriously. The Bank says it will never yield to pressure. But if the workers agree to stop throwing away its gold, it might consider an urgent cut in rates.

Relations between the UK government and protesting farmers seem to be infected by a logic almost as crazy. The farmers, having destroyed imports of Irish beef and mounted angry pickets, are now blockading ports. Ministers express sympathy for the farmers and make routine calls for them to obey the law. But instead of a concerted effort to make the police take a more vigorous line against illegal action, there are vague hints that the farmers put their tractors back in the barn, something might be done.

According to the absurd rules of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy, the farmers have a case. Sterling's strength caused four revaluations of the green pound this year. Since farm prices are set in Ecuas, profits have been hit. Under CAP rules, UK farmers would be entitled to

The \$600bn question

Are SBC and UBS set to take one of the few places at the global banking top table, ask George Graham and Jane Martinson

Restructuring in Switzerland's financial services industry is as sure as next Christmas Day, one senior Swiss banker commented last year.

This year Christmas has come early. Indeed, it has struck twice: after Credit Suisse's SF15.6bn (\$38bn) merger with Winterthur in August, the country is now braced for the announcement this morning of a much larger combination between Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation.

Marcel Ospel, SBC's chief executive, and Mathis Cabiallavesta, his opposite number at UBS, started discussions some months ago, but their talks are understood to have escalated after the Credit Suisse-Winterthur deal. The combination, likely to be called Union Bank of Switzerland, will be the second largest commercial bank in the world, after HSBC, with assets of nearly \$600bn. It would also be the largest fund manager with some SF1.300bn in assets once private banking is included, and the biggest European investment bank, by some margin, with between 18,000 and 20,000 staff.

Bringing together two of Switzerland's big three banks was the target last year of Rainer Gut, chairman of Credit Suisse. Before his successful approach to Winterthur, he proposed a merger with UBS but was roundly rebuffed.

Nikolaus Senn, UBS's chairman at the time, said he viewed SBC as a more compatible partner than Credit Suisse, but said he believed the time was not right for such a massive combination, although things might change in five years.

The screw has turned faster than Mr Senn predicted. The merger of Morgan Stanley, one of the top tier of US investment banks, with Dean Witter Discover, the retail brokerage, was followed earlier this year by Travelers Group's takeover of Salomon Brothers to merge it with its Smith Barney brokerage. Then Merrill Lynch, which had paved the way in the US by combining investment banking with retail broking, took another step forward with the acquisition of Mercury Asset Management, the leading institutional fund manager in the UK.

These acquisitions have raised the stakes in the global investment banking and asset management businesses. Many bankers now subscribe to the view that the next few years will bring a titanic struggle for entry into a "global bulge bracket".

In this world view, only five or six banks will make it to the top. While there will always be money-making niches for specialist



Marcel Ospel,
chief executive of
Swiss Bank Corporation

Mathis Cabiallavesta,
chief executive of UBS

firms, the middle-ranking businesses are expected to go to the wall. For European banks, lacking an entry into the US investment banking market – the world's largest and most profitable – the dilemma is acute.

For years, the big three Swiss banks were opaque but broadly similar organisations. Private banking services for the rich were rolled into the domestic branch banking business. Investment banking, too, was more of an outgrowth of the banks' traditional international lending business than a free-standing operation – except for Credit Suisse, which almost by accident found itself owning, if not always controlling, First Boston, a venerable but faded Wall Street investment bank.

Over the past two years, all three have adopted new organisational structures that brought fresh transparency to the profitability of their different operations. The changes have split private banking, investment banking and domestic retail banking. SBC and Credit Suisse have set up institutional fund management as a separate division, while UBS broke out corporate and institutional credit.

The separation of profit lines has helped investors get a clearer picture of the three banks, but it has also cast a harsh light on the problems each division faces.

Most starkly, splitting off private banking has made it clear how little money the Swiss banks had been making in domestic retail banking. That may not be terribly surprising, given the five years of stagnation that have affected the Swiss economy. Still, it has given fresh impetus to efforts to cut back on branches, staffing and management overheads.

It has also led all three banks to cleanse their stable of the backlog of bad loans to the Swiss property and industrial sectors, which they have been carrying with massive one-off provisions.

But investment banking, too, comes under new scrutiny. Although earnings have been good in recent years, they are volatile. Problems such as UBS's upset in UK equity derivatives this summer can prove costly and shake an entire investment banking business off course.

UBS's whole investment banking business, including a strong European equities operation built on the old Phillips & Drew brokerage and the PDMF institutional fund management business, has appeared to be smoother, but institutional investment management could prove to be a complicated and unwilling merger.

Gary Brinson, head of SBC's asset management arm, is expected to run the combined fund management division. Mr Brinson joined SBC when his Chicago-based company was taken over two years ago, and SBC Brinson now manages some \$119bn.

This may not be welcome to UBS's asset management arm, one of the UK's largest asset managers with \$55bn in assets. The company, headed by Tony Dye, the most public market bear of recent years, is likely to fight to retain its independent stance on investment decisions.

But there could be other obstacles, too. When it was fighting off Mr Gut's approaches last year, UBS made much of the job losses that would result in Switzerland. Swiss politicians are sure to have something to say about the combination, and it will be some time before Mr Ospel and Mr Cabiallavesta get to play with their Christmas presents.

The bank has also come under fire for its handling of the sensitive question of the wartime accounts of Holocaust victims. This has led to a backlash against Swiss banks in the US, and UBS has been boycotted by customers such as New York City. In fact, UBS has far fewer dormant accounts than its two bigger rivals and far less to hide in terms of its wartime actions, but it seems to have lost the public relations battle.

William Hall

UBS: a tarnished image

genburger Bank, two small regional banks. It did not open its first London office until 1967.

Despite its late start, UBS grew rapidly in the 1970s under the leadership of Robert Holzach, who exploited Switzerland's position as a low-tax country with no foreign exchange regulations to capture a sizeable share of the huge money flows that were being recycled following

the sharp rise in world oil prices.

UBS emerged as the market leader, with a reputation as a sound conservative bank. And while most of its competitors have long since lost their triple A credit ratings, UBS continues to be rated triple A by Moody's, the US credit rating agency.

However, the bank's image has suffered recently. The aborted merger attempt by Credit Suisse

and constant criticism by Martin Ebner, the corporate predator who controls the biggest stake in UBS, have taken a heavy toll.

UBS's failure to pull off a big deal such as Swiss Bank Corporation's \$260m purchase of S.G. Warburg or Credit Suisse's acquisition of Winterthur has left an impression of a timid top management that has lost sight of its objectives.

OBSERVER

Notes from small islands

New Zealanders have always been a peripatetic bunch, but the country's top financial boffins are cropping up in the most unlikely places. Hang around in Mongolia and you could well bump into former treasury secretary Graham Scott. Alex Sundakar, head of the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, is a familiar face in the Ukraine. Murray Peter, another old treasury hand, is clocking up the miles round the old Soviet Far East, while his former colleague Tony Dale is busy in Croatia.

New Zealand is a paragon of financial virtue these days, so just about any country with economic ambitions wants to hear about the Kiwi way of doing things. Victoria University's Professor Claudia Scott reckons small fry like Mongolia find it easier to take advice from another tiddler than from big fish like the US.

Mongolia is taking guidance on everything from privatisation to accruals accounting. Peter Boag, a former head of the State Services Commission, is giving similar advice to a number of Pacific Island countries. It's not only emerging economies that are interested. Former finance minister Ruth

are meaningless and unimportant".

Perhaps Zama feels safer in jail than on the outside, where enemies of the state continue to "disappear" at an alarming rate.

Cold shoulder

Bill Clinton may be in the clear, but Washington's fund-raising scandal continues to claim new victims. The latest casualties are several of the White House's annual Christmas parties. With the Democratic party still deep in debt, seasonal spending has been slashed by \$100,000 and the traditional schedule of 25 parties has been slashed to only 15. The decision leaves many of Washington's glitterati terrified of being left out in the cold, though it should help keep the presidential paunch in check.

Bar humbug

Prime minister Mesut Yilmaz has been working hard to clean up Turkey's human rights image ahead of this week's European Union enlargement summit in Luxembourg. The smug is that imprisoned political campaigners just won't accept the amnesties on offer.

The authorities last month told Eylem Yilmaz, a Kurdish human rights lawyer, to quit jail only weeks after sentencing him to 22 years for supporting a peaceful end to the Kurdish conflict. He said he felt fine and couldn't understand why the government wanted to free him on health grounds.

Now Leyla Zama, a Kurdish former MP sentenced to 15 years for belonging to the PKK

Kurdish guerrilla group, is fighting government efforts to get her out of the slammer. She suffers from osteoporosis, a bone condition, but says that compared to the democracy, freedom, and peace of a people, personal and physical freedoms

of the Brazilian edition of *Playboy* – invited viewers to call a toll-free number to compete for cash prizes. So many took up the challenge that Teleisp was unable to cope.

Fantasia has now withdrawn its toll-free number until more lines are installed. And Ms Rodriguez is telling viewers: "Don't call us, we'll call you."

Which watchdog

It's no surprise to learn that the average financial regulator is a 50-year-old male with a degree in economics. But the newly-published *Who's Who in Financial Regulation* reveals that they're not all as dull as ditch-water. One day you'll be glad you knew Bank of Jamaica bigwig Aubrey Anderson grows orchids; or that Mumba Kapunza, chief executive of the Zambian Securities and Exchange Commission is an amateur chessman.

Bank of England man Michael Foot is just the chap to blow the whistle on dodgy banks – he's a football referee in his spare time. And it's worth keeping on the right side of Magda Breedy, Superintendent General at the Central Bank of Costa Rica; at 77 she may be the world's oldest financial regulator, but apparently she's still a dab hand on the shooting range.

Financial Times

100 years ago

The Case Of The Vanishing Rail Van North America is large and pretty well covered by railway lines, so that when a rail van is lost for ten months, the line to which it belonged is soon discovered.

Fantasia has now withdrawn its toll-free number until more lines are installed. And Ms Rodriguez is telling viewers: "Don't call us, we'll call you."

50 years ago

Trouble In South America The Bank of London and South America is an energetic institution whose fortunes are of the greatest importance to Britain's overseas trade. In these days when Latin American dictators are busily increasing the difficulties in the way of Britain's trade, the bank has many problems.

Luckily it has never lacked for able men, thoroughly experienced in the affairs of the South American continent.

1500 flights a week.
British Midland
The airline for Europe

FINANCIAL TIMES

Monday December 8 1997

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British Midland
The airline for Europe

Commission to propose action on covert alliances

Italy plans shake-up of corporate governance

By James Blitz in Rome

The Italian government will this week launch its most concerted attempt to reform the way the country's leading companies are run.

In the face of concern that Italy's corporate world is dominated by covert alliances among big-name companies that work against the interests of small shareholders, a commission examining corporate governance and takeover laws is to make a range of proposals to parliament.

Among them is a law to stop large shareholders controlling a company if they have well below half the company's shares, and new rules allowing minority shareholders to vote at annual general meetings and sue company boards.

The commission, headed by Professor Mario Draghi, the Treasury's director-general, has triggered fears among leading businesses that the

traditional Italian way of controlling companies could be fundamentally changed.

The commission's work has aroused particular interest because of the recent resignation of Guido Rossi as chairman of Telecom Italia. He tried without success to introduce corporate governance rules for the newly privatised company.

There are increasing signs that lower interest rates are pushing small Italian investors out of government bonds and into equities. These shareholders' rights need protection.

One of the central proposals is for a new rule on takeovers that would require a company to make a formal public offer to purchase all the shares in another company once it owns 30 per cent of its capital.

The Draghi commission is concerned that organisations have been able to control a company with a 30 per cent stake – and sometimes less – by relying on covert relation-

ships with other shareholders.

The second important proposal comes in the area of shareholders' voting rights.

The use of proxies at shareholders' meetings is largely unknown in Italy, and the commission will introduce proposals obliging proxies to be used – and for the voting intentions of small shareholders to be transparent and strictly adhered to by institutions representing them et AGMs.

Finally, the commission is to propose new rules on cross-shareholdings between companies. The current 2 per cent limit on cross-shareholdings, which is much lower than in France and Germany, is to remain as a general rule.

However, in an attempt to bring Italian practice in line with that of the rest of Europe, the limit will be raised to 5 per cent if shareholders' meetings of both the companies involved give their approval.

Companies' Emu costs

Continued from Page 1

a direct result of the price transparency created by a single currency.

But companies also believe that long-term gains in efficiency will more than offset the negative cost implications in the short run.

Vicky Pryce, chief economist of KPMG Management Consulting, said: "The one-off costs of the single currency will be extremely high, but these are likely to be dwarfed by longer-term reductions in margins that will result from downward pressure on prices, or upward pressure on wages.

"Despite these potential pitfalls, an overwhelming majority of respondents in our survey believe Emu will have a positive impact on profitability," she said. The response suggested that EU companies might be taking a "rose-tinted" view of Emu.

Of the respondents, 64 per cent said they expected the range of prices for nearly identical goods or services to narrow. About 49 per cent of respondents said average prices would go down.

The KPMG report said: "This is a recognition that a single currency will make it increasingly difficult to maintain different pricing structures for different markets. Any such discrepancies will be removed by grey imports – traders buying cheaply in one market and undercutting the prevailing price where it is higher – by cross-border international buyers."

A vast majority – 87 per cent – believe Emu will be beneficial to their companies.

Europe's telecoms connection rates 'stifle competition'

By Alan Cane in London

Competition in Europe's liberalising telecommunications markets is in danger of being stifled by high and widely diverging interconnection charges, a report suggests.

That is the principal implication of a broadly based study by Ovum, a London-based consultancy, comparing the interconnection rates levied by telecoms operators across the world.

The study indicates clearly that where regulation is rigorous and interconnection charges low, as in the UK, competition flourishes. The opposite is true where regulation is weak or absent. In New Zealand, where there is no regulation, charges are five times higher than those in the UK.

Interconnection charges are the prices paid by rival operators in a competitive market to the incumbent operator for conveying or delivering calls. The incumbent typically owns the only nationwide infrastructure and its rivals have to use its network to carry their calls for part of their journey.

Representing more than 50 per cent of a typical company's operating expenses, they are the most important single element in determining how quickly competition develops. The higher the interconnection charge, the less easy it is for a rival operator to undercut the incumbent on price.

The Ovum research was

sponsored by British Telecommunications, the dominant UK operator, in a campaign to secure common standards of telecoms regulation across Europe.

BT has invested millions in alliances in the main European countries. It will be at a disadvantage if high interconnection charges mean competition develops only slowly after January 1 1998, the date set by the European Commission for telecoms market liberalisation.

The Ovum study shows interconnection charges across Europe for delivering a call range from 0.58p (0.83 cents) a minute (BT) to 2.27p a minute (Telecom Italia). BT's prices were the lowest of the 17 operators surveyed, including the US groups Bell Atlantic, Ameritech and Nyxer.

All the European operators with the exception of BT, Deutsche Telekom and Telia of Sweden were more expensive than "best practice" limits set by the European Commission.

International call prices are governed by the accounting rate system where operators pay each other similar but inflated amounts to carry each other's calls. This is expected to collapse at some future date.

If it is replaced by a form of interconnect pricing at today's levels, it would result in a significant imbalance in payments between the UK and its continental European partners.

Loan for Russian diamond producer collapses

By Kenneth Gooding, in London

A \$500m loan facility for Russia's biggest diamond producer, Almaly-Rossi-Sakha (ARS), arranged by a group of western banks, has collapsed.

This is a substantial setback for ARS, which urgently needs to refurbish existing mines and finance new exploration.

Analysts suggest Netwest

Markets of the UK, which was leading the loan, withdrew because turbulence in Asian financial markets is spilling over to other emerging markets, including Russia. They say ARS and the banks could not agree what changes should be made to the deal, and the banks reluctantly withdrew.

The loan was put on hold in January when De Beers, the South African group which dominates world trade in rough, or uncut, diamonds, ended its formal links with Russia.

The loan facility had been conditional on ARS supplying diamonds to De Beers, which then would repay the banks. De Beers finally reached agreement on a new contract with Russia in October.

In the meantime, Netwest helped to arrange a loan from some Russian banks for ARS to help keep production going.

ARS needs the cash to develop new sources of diamonds to replace its declining Udachny mine in Siberia. "Unless ARS gets this money, the long-term ability of Russia to mine diamonds is in question," said one analyst.

Diamond International, published by the CRU International consultancy, reported that ARS also hoped to raise several hundred million dollars via a Eurobond offering late this year, with the help of SBC Warburg Dillon Read and Salomon Smith Barney.

"That is if the rating process now under way in Moscow can produce what many doubt is possible – a clear picture of the company's internal financial flows and diamond inventory," it said.

Under the terms of the contract with De Beers, Russia is to sell \$550m-\$1.2bn of diamonds a year to the South African group's London-based Central Selling Organisation.

The contract runs only to the end of 1998 instead of the usual five years, and this puts more pressure on ARS in dealing with the western banks. The contract can be extended by two years by agreement, but there is no certainty this will happen. At the time of the signing, Nicky Oppenheimer, De Beers chairman-elect, said no extension would be considered unless Russia lived up to the terms and the spirit of the new agreement.

THE LEX COLUMN

Swiss swank



The expected merger between Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation to create the world's second largest bank would not lack for either ambition or logic. Slamming together their overlapping retail banking operations is obviously sensible. Domestic banking mergers offer greater scope for cost savings than mergers across regions. However, the challenge is enormous and signs that SBC executives would hold the key posts are encouraging. They have a better track record than the UBS team. Furthermore, the successful cost-cutting by Swiss pharmaceutical giants Ciba and Sandoz is a heartening precedent for a merger of such social and political significance.

Together UBS and SBC's fund management and private banking businesses would tower over rival Credit Suisse, though they would still have to prove that bigger is better. Doubt remains, however, over the new entity's investment banking strategy. Through acquisitions, SBC now has a credibility that UBS's largely organic growth has not delivered. Selling the UBS business would be a possibility. However, as it is no more impressive than the investment banking arm of NatWest and Barclays – which were difficult to sell – expectations should not rise too high.

Nor should they entertain hopes of joining the first division of global investment banks without a strong US presence.

UK gilt strips

The theory behind today's introduction of a gilt strips market is sound enough. By allowing gilts to be stripped into their coupon and principal elements and traded separately, they are made more flexible. For a government facing an interest bill over £20bn, any measure that may shave a few basic points off its funding costs makes sense. All recent efforts to modernise the gilt market have had this aim.

The reality is likely to be somewhat sedate. Sure, with £20bn of gilts stripable, and all with the same two coupon dates, the Bank of England has done what it can to promote liquidity. But if the gilt repo market is anything to go by, UK institutions can be relied on to display a robust inertia initially towards these new products. Their enthusiasm will not be assisted by the inverted shape of the UK yield curve; in these circumstances, the yield on a stripped bond will be slightly below its conventional equivalent.

Right now, this is hardly exciting news. A plunging gold price has left most investors wishing they had never heard of the metal. But even gold shares will have their day, and when it comes the two South African companies will be hard to ignore. Low production costs, large reserves and potentially significant

Still, the certainty strips provide

productivity gains represent an attractive offer. And with the market in a bear phase, those promises of future growth count less and hard cash more. The South African habit of paying dividends suddenly looks more attractive.

With these companies new to the language of shareholder value, investor acceptance will be slow. But if anything can guarantee performance, it is that they have launched simultaneously. With little to lose, the competitive spur will be intense. Both companies offer much promise, though Goldco may offer greater upside simply because its key assets have been worse managed in the past.

Correction: Cookson

Contrary to the report on Saturday, Cookson has not issued a profit warning.

Europe today

Snow is likely in Scandinavia but it will turn to rain later, except in Finland where it will stay very cold. The Balkans and Italy will have some sunshine after early fog patches have cleared.

The eastern Mediterranean, including Greece and Turkey, will be wet with some heavy showers and occasional thunderstorms.

Spain and Portugal will cloud over during the day, with rain moving in from the north-west.

Western Europe will become breezy, with showers moving south-eastwards.

North-western Europe and the British Isles will have heavy showers and strong winds.

Five-day forecast

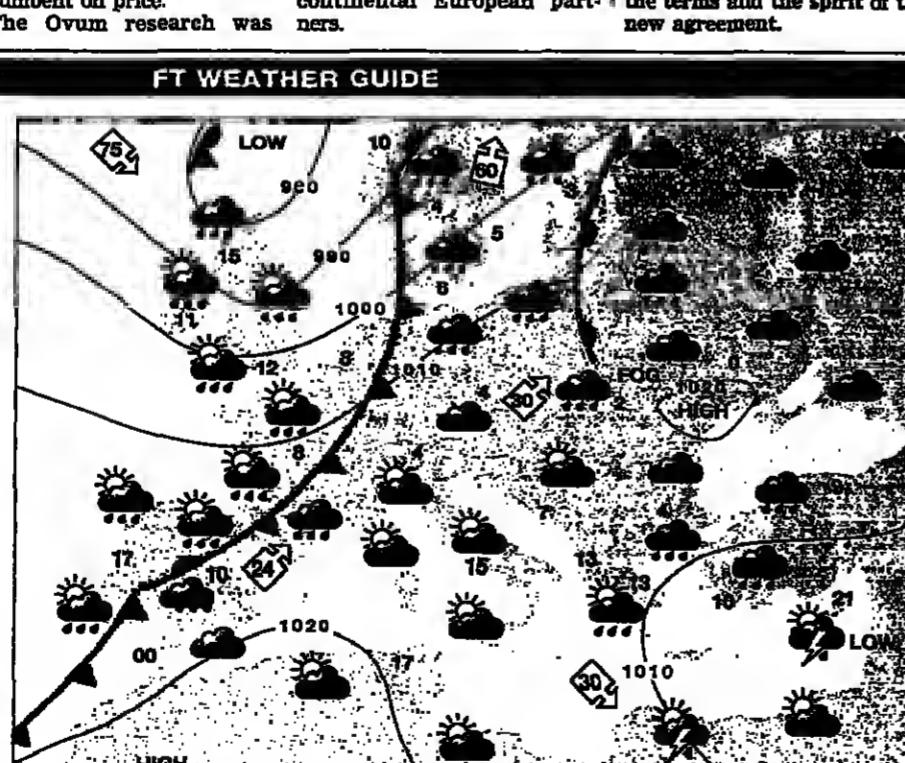
High pressure will ensure north-west Europe remains settled. In the second half of the week western Europe will become increasingly cloudy and wet. The Mediterranean will remain generally settled.

TODAY'S TEMPERATURES

	Maximum	Minimum	Location	Condition
Fair 2	Cardiff	Shower 11	Frankfurt	Fair 5
Shower 9	Cesme	Cloudy 20	Geneva	Fair 5
Fair 5	Chicago	Fair 4	Gibraltar	Shower 19
Shower 5	Cologne	Fair 6	Glasgow	Shower 11
Rain 10	Dakar	Fair 28	Manchester	Fair 8
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Marseille	Fair 3
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Melbourne	Fair 25
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Montreal	Fair 25
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Milan	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	New York	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Paris	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Perth	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Prague	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Rome	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Tel Aviv	Fair 24
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Tokyo	Rain 15
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Toronto	Sun 0
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Vancouver	Rain 8
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Venice	Fair 8
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Vienna	Fair 8
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Winnipeg	Fair 7
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28	Zurich	Fair 7
Rain 20	Dakar	Fair 28		

We wish you a pleasant flight.

Lufthansa



Situation at midday. Temperatures maximum for day. Forecasts by PA Weather Centre

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FINANCIAL TIMES COMPANIES & MARKETS

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Monday December 8 1997

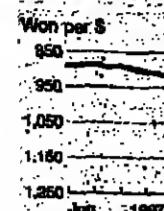
Week 50



INSIDE

Investors in Asia regain confidence

South Korea



Asian confidence rose last week after South Korea agreed a \$57bn rescue package with the International Monetary Fund. Indonesia and Thailand had already arranged IMF adjustment deals, while on Friday Malaysia revealed a hefty set of economic reforms.

Fears of unpaid debts and uncontrollable collapses of banks and companies are waning. Currencies, Page 25

INTERNATIONAL EQUITIES

New issues breath life into Asia

After south-east Asia's turmoil, there are signs of life in at least one area - the new issues market. Several Hong Kong companies are preparing to launch their shares and China National Aviation is to relaunch its offering. Page 24

COMMODITIES

Supply of oil from Iraq is switched off

This week oil traders will be looking out for the market's reaction to Iraq's decision not to renew its oil-for-food deal with the United Nations. The last six-monthly deal expired on Friday, and Iraqi oil then ceased being pumped to Ceyhan, the Turkish Mediterranean port. Page 25

EMERGING MARKETS

Buoyant Taiwan out of step

Taiwan's fickle stock market last week embarked on a post-election rally. But the question looming over the week's heady 12 per cent share price rise is how long the celebration will last, given uncertainties over fall-out from financially wobbly Korea and Japan. Page 26

MARKETS THIS WEEK

New York

This week sees the publication of two indicators to show whether the labour market's good health has resulted in higher prices. Retail sales data for November are expected to show a strong rise of 0.4 per cent. This will be followed by producer price index figures. 25

London

UK stocks burst back into life last week, with the Footsie regaining the 5,000 level it lost in the midst of October's setback. Tomorrow sees fresh retail price data and the view is that underlying inflation will stay at 2.8 per cent, above the government's 2.5 per cent target. Page 25

Frankfurt

Although investors still have a wary eye on Asia, the mood in Germany is becoming more confident. After forecasts that unemployment could exceed 5m early next year, attention will be paid to tomorrow's figures for November. These are expected to show a rise. Page 25

Japan

A nervous week for Tokyo markets looms, following the wave of collapses in Japan's financial sector. Attention will focus on a package of measures the government is expected to announce to boost confidence in banks and brokers, and the broader economy. Page 25

INTERNATIONAL BONDS

Sydney ponders its electronic futures

If the Australian exchange goes ahead with its recently announced plan to replace its traditional "open outcry" futures markets with a computerised system, it will be the first sizeable futures market to make the transition. Page 25

FT GUIDE TO THE WEEK

- full listings Page 36

SINN FEIN AT NO 10
Sinn Féin leaders are due to meet Tony Blair, the UK prime minister, in Downing Street on Thursday. Many have expressed outrage at the meeting. It is the first time senior Irish Republicans have been invited to talks at Downing Street since 1921.

LABOUR FACES FIRST REVOLT

On Wednesday Britain's Labour government faces its first serious backlash since the election in a vote to cut benefits to lone parents.

IRAN HOSTS ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

Some 2,000 delegates, including 35 Moslem heads of state, are expected to attend the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Tehran, which begins on Tuesday.

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Promodès in \$926m Italian deal

French retailer takes stake in GS group

By Paul Botts in Milan,
Andrew Jack in Paris and
Peggy Hollinger in London

The French retail industry stepped up its onslaught on the Italian market at the weekend with the announcement that Promodès, one of France's largest hypermarket chains, was taking a stakes worth about £1.5billion (\$2.25billion) in GS, Italy's third-largest supermarket group.

The French group, which is locked in a hostile takeover battle for control of its French rival Casino, is also expected to announce this week the purchase of a smaller regional food retailer, Catteau, from Tesco of the UK for about £225m (\$375.75m).

The transactions appear to defy suggestions that the Casino takeover battle - which was launched this autumn and has been prolonged until the end of January by a legal appeal - is restricting Promodès' ability to expand.

However, Promodès itself stressed yesterday that the Italian deal was costing nothing at present. It refused to quantify the synergies triggered by the deal, but said it would increase returns to shareholders from next year.

Promodès' Italian deal comes on the heels of the recent strategic partnership between the

French Auchan hypermarket group and Rinascente, Italy's second-largest retailing company after the Co-op group. It also coincides with negotiations between the French Casino chain and Standa, the Italian retailer controlled by Fininvest, the holding company of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Under the latest deal, the French group will combine its existing Italian operations with GS and some of the activities of the retailer Finiper, taking a 32 per cent stake in the combined group.

It said it had an option to increase its share to 50 per cent in 2000.

The partnership between Promodès and GS will create a retailing operation in Italy with annual sales of about £8.3billion, while Finiper has turnover of about £2.5billion a year.

The new partnership reflects the long awaited shake-out and consolidation of the Italian distribution industry which has traditionally lagged its European counterparts. Italian distribution has continued to be dominated by small retail businesses. In the food

sector alone, only 6 per cent of the Italian market is controlled by hypermarket chains compared with 47 per cent in France.

The strength of the big hypermarket operators in France has been a significant factor in Tesco's decision to sell Catteau to Promodès.

The deal, which has been widely expected, will be welcomed by Tesco's shareholders who have been unhappy with Catteau's dull performance since acquisition in 1993 for £175m. The chain has suffered falling margins and been disadvantaged by its relatively weak position compared with operators such as Promodès and Carrefour, and discounters such as Aldi.

Lonrho in talks over bid for SA mining group JCI

By Charlie Grosser

Lonrho, the British-based conglomerate, is in discussions with JCI about a bid for the South African mining group. In a move that would remove an unwanted shareholder from Lonrho's register and effectively achieve the same benefits as a large buy-back.

The talks are the latest twist in labyrinthine negotiations within the mining sector.

In the past year, South Africa's Anglo American has taken a stake in Lonrho and JCI has discussed its own takeover of Lonrho.

More recently, Anglo has agreed to sell its 28 per cent in Lonrho stake to JCI in exchange for JCI's gold interests.

If the latest deal is approved by the European Commission, JCI would be left with a small portfolio of metal interests, including a 57 per cent stake in a chrome producer, a cash pile of up to £100m (\$167m) and a holding in Lonrho.

In a separate deal, JCI plans to sell its Tavistock coal mines to Duiker Mining, in which Lonrho holds a 61 per cent stake, for an estimated £200m.

Lonrho is believed to have balked at an earlier deal with JCI partly because it did not want to increase its exposure to gold mines.

If the takeover goes ahead, JCI's chairman, Mzi Khumalo, is expected to be offered a seat on the Lonrho board.

The talks are not expected to result in a deal before the New Year.

Anglo's stake in Lonrho has yet to be passed on to JCI and the European Commission, which insisted that Anglo sell its Lonrho holding in the first place, may insist on certain conditions being met before JCI can assume control of the Lonrho shares. These could involve Anglo reducing its involvement in JCI.

Meanwhile, the City of London is still waiting for Lonrho to conclude the sale of its Princess Hotels and its Dutton-Forshaw motor dealership.

The sale of Princess Hotels to the Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal has been delayed for several months. Lonrho has indicated that US hotel groups could also be interested.

Edward Luce

SA gold, Lex, Page 18

French bond aims to make its mark

Index-linked issue seeks to lure investors in Germany

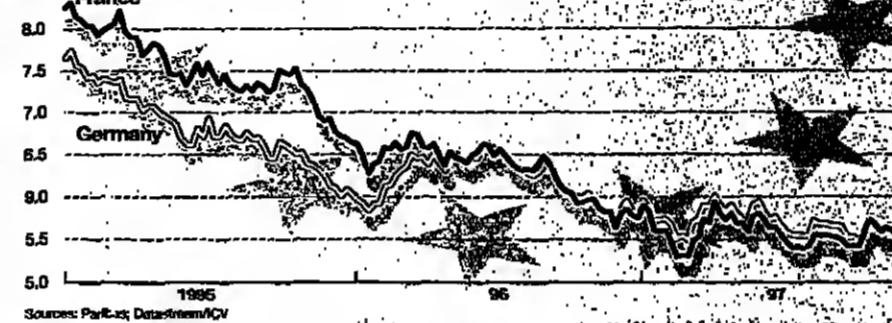
Bidding to be benchmark

Size of government bond market (Ecu bn, November 1997)



10-year benchmark bond yields

%



Source: Part II of Datastream/ICMA

increasingly wrong-footed by French initiatives, of which the most recent was last week's plan to issue index-linked bonds. An index-linked bond is paper which pays out a coupon identical to the rate of inflation. This gives institutional fund managers security against volatility in the economy and lowers the government's cost of funding by keeping inflation at low levels. Issuing index-linked bonds would simply be an added advantage to investing in the French market as opposed to the German market," said Graham McDevitt, chief bond researcher at Paribas in London. Ober initiatives include

France's announcement last year that it would re-denominate all government debt into euros in January 1999. Others, including Germany, have followed suit. But France is the only one to have pledged to round out awkward numbers in the process and if necessary reimburse the difference in cash. "France appears to be a lot more friendly towards investors than Germany at the moment," said an official at a German bank in London.

In addition, France has a much more sophisticated market in securities repurchase contracts, or repos. These allow investors to borrow securities they do not own. This enables the investor to "short"

the market in the hope that the price of the security will fall in the intervening period. Lastly, France has by far the most developed bond strip market in Europe. Strips are the different components of a conventional bond separated and traded as distinct securities. Germany, which introduced strips trading only in July, is again considered to be well behind Paris on this front. "On almost all measurements France has a more liquid and sophisticated bond market than Germany," said Mr McDevitt. However, some analysts warn that France's public relations effort may not prove enough to win over enough

investors after 1999. Although the yield on the French government 10-year bonds fell below the German yield in 1996, most investors did not switch to French bonds to take advantage of rising French bond prices.

Only 10 per cent of French government debt is held by foreign investors as

COMPANIES AND FINANCE: UK

Financial restructuring after cashflow from former MoD homes failed to meet loan interest

Annington Homes to issue £1bn bonds

By Simon Davies and Norma Cohen

Addington Homes is preparing to issue £1bn of bonds to restructure its finances this week, after initial cashflow from the former Ministry of Defence homes was insufficient to pay interest on its existing loans.

Annington, which was formed by Nomura International and fellow investors, Blackrock Capital Finance and Electra Fleming, acquired 57,000 properties from the MoD for £1.7bn in November 1996. It subsequently issued £90m of securitised bonds, backed by the cashflow from property leases, to the government.

The company had planned to sell about 1,000 property units a year that were surplus to MoD requirements, but it has struggled to meet aggressive sales and costs targets. As a result, it passed on the latest interest payment on a £200m cumulative subordinated loan note.

The loan notes include warrants convertible into



Aldershot married quarters: some of the 57,000 homes that were surplus to MoD requirements and sold for £1.7bn in 1996

Annington equity. Nomura's difficulties are understood to have stemmed from delays in assembling a professional property team to manage the acquisition, and subsequent departures of key staff.

Annington's chief executive, Hamish MacKay, is

leaving and Nomura is currently searching for a replacement.

Property investors said the ability to dispose of properties quickly was a key element in extracting the most profit from the deal.

"The average price for

these homes is £28,000, and they offer pretty, good-sized gardens and are very well maintained for houses at that end of the market," said one property executive. "But they have never been in private hands before and are going to need some work."

Also, some of the homes were vandalised following the removal of military police from parts of the estate, and re-sales were delayed by the need for refurbishment.

However, sale prices for refurbished homes are

understood to be higher than expected.

Nomura said the current business performance was within the parameters of its business plan.

Annington plans to sell £90m of floating rate notes and a further £100m of zero coupon bonds. The issue will repay all existing bank debt and subordinated loans, and provide a further £100m for working capital.

The deal will bring down Annington's borrowing costs to around 100 basis points over Libor - saving more than one percentage point on its current arrangements. Annington also plans a swap whereby interest payments on the FRN will be skewed towards the latter part of the bond's life.

This increase in valuations will support the bond issues, which are expected to be rated by Moody's, Duff & Phelps and Fitch IBCA.

Nomura considers the investment sufficiently successful that it is planning to use some of the cash raised for other investments by Annington.

Newton seeks partners to expand fund

By Jane Martinson, Investment Correspondent

Newton Investment Management, one of the few remaining independent fund management companies in the UK, has appointed advisers to find potential joint venture partners in the US

tial partners to fill geographical gaps in its mainly UK business. The investment bank has identified several groups, including large banks or mutual fund groups with wide retail distribution links, in continental Europe and the US.

Newton has distribution agreements with groups in South America and India.

About \$2bn of the funds managed by Newton derive from pension funds, while the rest is divided into retail and private client business.

The group is keen to expand its retail side.

The Royal Bank of Scotland has a 33 per cent stake in Newton, which is not a publicly quoted company. The deal dates back to Newton's takeover of Capital House, RBS's asset management arm.

Stewart Newto, who founded the company 20 years ago, also holds between 30 and 40 per cent of the group, while the rest of the company is owned by employees.

Newton suffered two years of bad performance and was forced to close its doors to new clients to cope with its rapid growth between 1992-94.

It reorganised last year and Mr Newton stood down as chief executive to concentrate on investment management.

Since then performance has picked up.

Telewest takeover talks suggest US West interest

By Chris Gresner

US West, the telecommunications and media group, is thought to have held informal and preliminary talks with Telewest Communications, the UK cable company in which it holds a 27 per cent stake, about a full takeover.

Telewest, Britain's second largest cable company, is still officially in discussions with a rival cable company, NTL. If those talks are successful, they could lead to a merger. But growing doubts over their outcome may have prompted US West to reconsider its position.

US West also holds a stake in One-2-One, the mobile phone company which it co-owns with Cable & Wireless.

This gives US West a relationship with Britain's other principal cable force, Cable & Wireless Communications, itself the result of a merger of UK cable groups.

A move by US West would no doubt be welcomed by Telewest's other main shareholders, SBC and Cox Communications. The cable company was floated three years ago at 182p a share and closed on Friday at 73p.

US West's soundings come at a critical time for the cable industry in the UK.

British Sky Broadcasting, which supplies movies and sports to the cable industry as well as competing against it for subscribers, has recently raised the stakes by introducing a new discount telephone service. Cable

companies have typically claimed that their disappointing performance in cable television is offset by the inroads they have made in the telecoms market.

Cable companies have also struggled to establish an alternative source of programming outside BSkyB. This may be changing as two months ago Telewest and three other cable companies signed a pay per view deal with a Hollywood studio.

Some analysts are now declaring themselves more bullish on the sector, pointing out that many of the companies have built a significant amount of their networks and are therefore able to dedicate more resources to marketing.

By Chris Gresner

Bids go in this week for Angel Train Coatings, the rolling stock leasing company put up for sale by Nomura, the Japanese investment bank.

It is understood that one of the bids has been pitched at between £300m and £400m, but Nomura is thought to be pushing for a higher figure. A deal is expected to be concluded within weeks.

Three potential bidders have made it to the shortlist. They are thought to include Royal Bank of Scotland, GE Capital of the US, and GATX, a US leasing group, in collaboration with a NatWest subsidiary, Lombard.

Angel was privatised for £272m and is the last of the three rolling stock leasing companies to be put up for sale by its original owners.

It made an operating profit of £125.7m last year

on turnover of £291m. But the company has informed bidders it expects profits to rise to £147m in the year to March 1998 on turnover of £283m. Angel is owned 85 per cent by Nomura with the rest bid by Babcock Brown, a leasing group, and Pridex Associates, its management.

It is thought that the GATX/Lombard bid is the only one to include rail expertise. In addition to rail leasing, GATX is also the fourth largest independent aircraft lessor in the world.

The successful bidder will have to take responsibility for some of the long term maintenance of the rolling stock. The final price which Angel commands will probably not match the amounts raised for the sales of Porterbrook and Eversholt, the two other rolling stock leasing companies because more of Angel's cashflows are not available to a buyer because they have been securitised by Nomura.

The Angel price could also be depressed by the threat of increased regulation. John Prescott, deputy prime minister, is understood to be planning to tighten his grip on the rail industry through direct regulation of the rolling stock leasing companies.

By Peter Marsh

Bosnian medical demand targeted

Other British members of the consortium include Huntleigh, which makes hospital beds and diagnostic equipment, and BMM Weston, which makes steam autoclaves for sterilisation. BOC and Smiths Industries are getting involved through subsidiaries making anaesthetic equipment and operating tables.

The first products to be installed in Bosnia by the consortium include lighting and beds for operating theatres, to be supplied by Brandon and Smiths in a £250,000 contract funded by the World Bank.

Graeme Hall, managing director of Brandon, said he had high hopes that a large part of the equipment in the hospital revival programme could be supplied by UK companies.

The plan has been masterminded by Adrian Hall, operations director of the family-owned Brandon, and Graeme Hall's brother. His duties in recent weeks have included riding around Bosnia in an armoured car scouting for potential orders in war damaged hospitals.

Yule to bid £245m for Holliday

By Chris Gresner

Yule Catto, the chemicals group, is expected to table an agreed offer for its rival Holliday Chemical at around 240p a share. This would value the company at around £245m.

Holliday Chemicals shares closed at 238p.

The announcement is expected this week.

Holliday's chairman and founder, Michael Peagam, is expected to make a £40m plus fortune from the take-over. He is also the largest shareholder of the company, which floated four years ago.

Earlier this month, Holliday produced a range of products, including pharmaceutical intermediates, pigments, dyes, chrome chemicals and inks.

Yule Catto is a leading producer of speciality chemicals and building products.

In 1996 the company reported pre-tax profits of £26.5m on turnover of £281m.

Standard acts to tighten bank's Chinese controls

By James Harding and Simon Davies

Standard Chartered Bank has had to tighten internal controls in its operations in China and Macao, following cases of malpractice that led to dismissals and legal proceedings.

The London-based bank's Shanghai branch, one of the few foreign banks licensed this year by the Chinese government to operate in local currency, is still pursuing a case of alleged fraud, which resulted in the loss of \$3.5m (£2.3m) in 1994.

A senior executive at the branch transferred the money to a rural branch of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, one of the four large state-owned banks in China, and Standard Chartered has since been unable to trace the money.

More recently, several senior Standard Chartered officials in Macao were replaced after what one bank executive called "a lapse in standard reporting procedures".

The problems in China have been kept quiet for the past three years. Standard Chartered has since substantially revamped its compliance systems, following significant management changes. However, the bank is understood to be pursuing the money through the Chi-

nease courts. ICBC has denied all knowledge of the transaction.

However, at the time this bad loan emerged, the bank was reeling from substantial losses in India, a bribery investigation at its Macao bullion arm, and compliance irregularities in its Hong Kong-based securities business.

Standard Chartered was in the first wave of international financial institutions given the right to lend in Chinese currency, a licence which is only granted to banks with three consecutive years of profit.

Standard Chartered does not release financial figures for its branches in China, but it is understood that the mainland China operations generated trading profit of more than £10.2m last year. However, back in 1994, it is likely that recognition of this \$3.5m loan loss would have knocked the China division into the red.

Other international banking groups are understood to be tightening internal business structures in China, where a troubled banking sector and inexperienced personnel are only slowly emerging from the years of central planning.

So far, nine foreign banks have been licensed to lend in yuan, but another 11 licences are understood to be under consideration.

Herbal drugs gain US support

By Roger Taylor

The US Food and Drug Administration has given the go-ahead in principle for the development of drugs from traditional herbal remedies.

Phytopharm, the UK biotechnology group which specialises in these "botanicals", has been granted permission to start clinical trials of a treatment cream for eczema made from twelve plants, even though it is unable to explain how it works.

The regulators usually

require drug companies to identify the active ingredient in any product and explain how it operates.

This has been a barrier to the authorisation of botanicals, because the chemical make-up and mode of operation are usually unknown.

Phytopharm, which has links with companies in India, Indonesia and South Africa, has a number of botanical products under development, including a drug for arthritis developed from turmeric and a new treatment for Alzheimer's disease which has shown

strong results in early trials. The decision of the US Food and Drug Administration to grant an investigational new drug licence (IND) to Zemaphyt means that they have accepted in principle that if production is closely controlled and the drugs can be shown to work, they are prepared to license them as medicines.

The UK authorities indicated earlier this year that they too will, in principle, agree to license botanical drugs.

Richard Dixey, chief executive of Phytopharm, said the decision was an important breakthrough for the company and for the development of botanical products in general. The company would have eight products going into clinical trials next year and had received interest from several large pharmaceutical groups wanting to license them. Last week, the company announced a loss of £3.6m for the year to August 31. It has cash resources of more than £6m and hopes to generate income from licensing deals next year.

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FLEMING FLAGSHIP SERIES II

Société d'Investissement à Capital Variable
Européen Bank & Business Center
6, route de Trèves, L-2633 Niederkirchen
R.C. Luxembourg No. B 59 252

The Shareholders of Fleming Flagship Series II ("the Company") are hereby convened to an

Extraordinary General Meeting

to be held on Wednesday, 17 December 1997 at 2:30 p.m. (Luxembourg time) at the registered office of the Company or at such adjournment thereof for the purpose of voting on the amendments to the Articles of Incorporation as set out in the following agenda:

1. To amend in Article 3, the first paragraph so as to read:

"The exclusive object of the Company is to place the funds available to it in transferable securities and other permitted assets of any kind with the purpose of spreading investment risks and affording its shareholders the results of the management of its portfolio."

2. To amend, inter alia, Articles 5, 6, 10., 11., 14., 16., 17., 20., 21., 22., 23. and 26. such amendments relating mainly to the following matters:

- to permit the board of directors to create, within each class of shares, sub-classes with different characteristics;
- to allow charging for the issue of bearer share certificates;
- to increase the maximum period for the payment of redemption proceeds from seven to ten business days;
- to permit liquidation of classes and sub-classes; merger of classes and sub-classes and merger of classes with other investment funds upon decision of the shareholders and in certain circumstances upon decision of the board of directors;
- to provide that 24th December will not be considered as a Declining Date;
- to permit the board of directors to manage two or more classes of shares on a pooled basis and to specify the rules applicable to such pooling technique;
- to permit the board of directors to determine the minimum amount of dividends to be distributed.

A complete version of the above amendments is available upon request at the registered office of the Company in Luxembourg.

Decisions on the agenda require a 50% quorum of presence of the shares in issue. Decisions will be validly adopted if voted in favour by a two thirds majority of the shares present or represented. A shareholder entitled to attend and vote at the meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his behalf. Such proxy need not be a shareholder of the Company. Holders of bearer shares are entitled to attend the meeting and deposit their bearer share certificates five business days prior to the meeting with:

- Kredietbank S.A., Luxembourgoise, 45, boulevard Royal, L-2655 Luxembourg, or
- Banca Commerciale Italiana SpA, Corso di Porta Nuova 7, I-20121 Milano, or
- Creditanstalt-Bankverein Aktiengesellschaft, Schottenring 6, A-1010 Wien, or
- BHF-BANE Aktiengesellschaft, Bockenheimer Landstraße 10, D-6912 Frankfurt/Main, or
- Banco Exterior de España, Corteza Internacional, Via de los Poblanos, 2-28045 Madrid

Shareholders who cannot personally attend the meeting are requested to use the prescribed form of proxy (available at the registered office of the Company) and return it at least five business days prior to the date of the Extraordinary General Meeting to the Company c/o Fleming Fund Management (Luxembourg) S.A., L-2638 Luxembourg.

The Board of Directors, November 1997

FLEMINGS

Lehmans Brothers Holdings PLC

ITL150,000,000.000

Floating Rate Notes due 2001

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that for the Interest Period 5th December, 1997 to 5th March, 1998 the Rate of Interest has been fixed at 6.44531% per annum. The interest accruing for such three month period will be ITL 80,566 per ITL 5,000,000 Note and ITL 80,664 per ITL 50,000,000 Note against presentation of coupon No. 5.

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To get further information, please refer to the site placed in "Development Business" on November 30: "The Economic" corresponding to the week December 6 to 12 and "Clarín" and "La Nación" of Buenos Aires dated December 1.
<http://www.mecon.ar/csgpre>

City of Uppsala
US\$110,000,000
Floating rate notes 1998
The notes will bear interest at 6.225% per annum from 8 December 1997 to 8 June 1998. Interest payable on 8 June 1998 will amount to US\$309.65 per US\$10,000 note.
Agent: Morgan Guaranty Trust Company
JP Morgan

Leumi International Investments NV (MTN)
US\$275,000,000 Guaranteed Floating Rate Notes 2004
The interest rate applicable to the above Notes in respect of the interest period commencing 8th December 1997 has been fixed at 6.0675% per annum. The interest accruing for such three month period will be paid on 3rd June 1998.
Bank Leumi (UK) Plc Principal Payment Agent

First Bangkok City Bank Public Company Limited
US\$100,000,000 Floating Rate Certificates of Deposit 2004
Interest Period: 20 December 1997 to 20 June 1998
Interest Rate: 6.4875% per annum
Interest Amount: US\$16,754.97 per US\$10,000 note
Payment Date: 20 June 1998
Agent Bank: SAKURA FINANCE ASIA LIMITED

T.I.M. (LUXEMBOURG) S.A.
US\$ 20,000,000 FRN DUE 1998
In accordance with the provisions of the above mentioned Notes, notice is hereby given as follows:
• Interest period: December 8, 1997 to June 8, 1998 (182 days)
• Interest payment date: June 8, 1998
• Interest rate: 6.4875% per annum
• Coupon amount payable per Bond of US\$ 100,000: US\$ 3,279.79
Agent Bank: BANQUE INTERNATIONALE A LUXEMBOURG

COMPANIES AND FINANCE

Blackstone brokers \$275m IBM lease

By William Lewis
in New York

Blackstone Group, the US investment institution, will today announce it has concluded one of the largest commercial leasing agreements ever in France as part of its strategy to expand its international property interests.

Descartes Défense V, a Blackstone affiliate, has

negotiated a new long-term \$275m lease to house the European headquarters of International Business Machines at the Descartes Tower in the office tower complex known as La Defense in Paris.

The move is part of Blackstone's plan to export the strategy it has been employing in the US of acquiring properties in central business districts to

Europe and other international cities "where the type of recovery we have experienced in the US market has not yet fully matured", said Thomas Saylik, Blackstone's senior managing director.

Blackstone owns about \$1bn of property assets including IBM's regional headquarters building in Chicago and Arundel Great Court, a property in central

London which houses Arthur Andersen's UK base.

The group recently closed its second property private equity fund with more than \$1.1bn of capital available for property investments.

Descartes Défense V is an affiliate of Blackstone Real Estate Advisors, itself an affiliate of the Blackstone Group.

IBM occupied the 825,000 sq ft office space at the time

of Blackstone's acquisition of the Descartes Tower from Compagnie Générale des Eaux in July.

However, in an unusual deal for the French property market, Blackstone has now renegotiated the lease to run through to 2008 without the opportunity for termination.

In France, commercial tenants normally have the right to terminate leases every three or six years.

French property experts said the deal was one of the most significant in recent years for the French property market.

"This is the largest leasing transaction of its type this year, and is undoubtedly the largest of such commercial leases in French real estate history," said Abraham de Koning, partner at Boudjalis, a French real estate company.

Swedbank criticised over share trading

By Tim Burt in Stockholm

The Stockholm stock exchange will this week reprimand Swedbank Markets, the broking arm of one of Sweden's largest banks, over alleged share price manipulation involving some of the country's most heavily traded stocks.

Sweden is likely to face criticism over trading activity in Volvo, Astra, Ericsson and Sparbanken, whose shares rose suddenly after the bank spent about SKr50m (\$6.4m) in a last-minute buying spree on November 13.

A three-week investigation by the exchange is understood to have concluded that Swedbank breached market regulations in buying up

stock to reduce its risk on a new index-linked bond. The pricing of the bond, known as Svenska Klassiker, was directly related to the performance of shares in Volvo, Astra, Ericsson and Sparbanken.

At the time, Swedbank admitted it had acted incorrectly but claimed it was an mistake.

While reprimanding Swedbank, exchange officials have decided not to refer the case to the stock exchange board, which has the power to expel members.

The criticism is also expected to fall short of recommending the withdrawal of authorisation to place buy-back orders.

The investigation was launched after intervention

from Swedbank helped lift Volvo's B shares from SKr197.50 to SKr205; Ericsson B shares rose from SKr317 to SKr321; Astra's most commonly traded A shares gained SKr1 to close at SKr126; and Sparbanken - the domestic arm of Swedbank - jumped from SKr176.50 to SKr185.

Swedbank reiterated that it had not engaged in price manipulation.

Hakan Killaker, head of Swedbank Markets, said: "It was an exercise that went wrong. But our own internal investigation has shown it was an error, not a deliberate act." He added that the bank had co-operated fully with the inquiry and had provided full details of its activities.

Brewers target new areas

By John Willman, Consumer Industries Editor

Brewing groups in emerging markets are poised to cash in on the increase in beer consumption worldwide, according to a report from Flemings, the UK investment bank.

Emerging markets already consume more than half the world's beer, the report says. But with beer sales stagnant in developed countries, all the growth globally is now in Asia, Africa, Latin America and eastern Europe.

Rising incomes and deregulation of markets are boosting consumption among young consumers in such countries, for whom beer is rapidly becoming the preferred alcoholic drink.

Some of the large international brewing groups have entered emerging markets - mostly through exports or joint ventures. But it is the local brewers in such countries that are best-placed to benefit, the report says.

It identifies Castle, produced by South African breweries, as the fastest growing beer brand among the top 20 internationally. Sales grew 17 per cent a year

between 1990 and 1996.

The South African group controls 98 per cent of its home market, but has rapidly expanded into the rest of southern and east Africa. It has also entered several eastern European markets to become the world's fourth largest brewer.

Companhia Cervejaria Brabia, the Brazilian drinks group, is now the world's fifth-largest brewer and one of the three most profitable in emerging markets which have the highest profit per hectolitre among the brewers in the report.

Only Heineken, the world's second-largest, can claim to be close to having a truly global brand, it says.

Grupa Modela of Mexico,

which brews Corona, is the most successful exporter in the emerging markets, the report says. Exports account for 14 per cent of production and 21 per cent of sales.

Joint ventures with brewers in emerging economies have allowed western brewers to enter protected markets.

Carlsberg of Denmark and Guinness of the UK share 98 per cent of the Malaysian beer market through two competing ventures which have the highest profit per hectolitre among the brewers in the report.

Only Tsingtao Yuhuara and Atsuo Miki - the two men being questioned - were respectively president and vice-president of the company.

By John Willman
in New York

DFS considers joining Barney's bidding battle

(of which some Y600bn will be disposed of this year, according to the bank's forecasts).

But Yasuda Trust Bank is a different case. Fuji says it is a close, historical ally: both were founding members of the "Yasuda" company group. There is also a business motive: officials at Fuji believe Yasuda's custody and fund management operations could fit in well with Fuji's plans to create a universal bank. Consequently, if Yasuda's commands are stripped away, synergy could be developed, they argue.

The problem, though, is that Yasuda has huge bad debts - put at around Y500bn by the company, but estimated by some analysts to be three times higher. Fuji has been reluctant to reveal its total exposure to the group but Mr Kasai says there is no chance of Yasuda failing and so the issue of additional liabilities will not arise.

DFS's share price has plunged: at yesterday's level of Y642 it is around a third of its summer peak. "We are very unhappy indeed about this," complained Mr Kasai.

The reason for the unease is clear: Fuji's ally Yasuda Trust Bank ailing, some investors worry Fuji could soon be exposed to new potential bad loans.

Fuji denies this, and insists it will not abandon the group. Fuji had refused to inject money to save Yasuda, a former ally - and argues that the collapse of Yasuda has only left it with up to Y20bn (\$153.7m) of losses on its Y89bn exposure to the Yasuda group. This is tiny compared with the bank's officially published Y1,800bn bad loans

which DFS would need to exceed Dickson's offer and would have to be consensual, satisfying all the constituents involved.

Myron Ullman, DFS chief executive, said yesterday: "The acquisition of Yasuda's would be consistent with our on-going strategy to broaden DFS's base as an upscale global retailer, announced it was considering a bid.

Barney's has already agreed to a \$247m deal to sell 51 per cent to Dickson Concepts, the Hong Kong retail group which had expressed an interest in Barney's include Saks Holdings, a rival US department store group which made a cash and stock offer worth \$250m but then withdrew it, and Texas Pacific, an investment partnership.

DFS has already been in discussions with Barney's management, and has held preliminary talks with its creditors' representatives. It stressed it was still considering the issue and had not yet decided to proceed.

Any bid would need to exceed Dickson's offer and would have to be consensual, satisfying all the constituents involved.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS DIGEST

News Corp close to Israeli tax solution

News Corporation, the media and entertainment group headed by Rupert Murdoch, appears close to settling its \$150m tax dispute with Israeli tax officials.

In October 1996 Israeli tax officials raided the offices of a subsidiary of News Corp as part of its probe into suspected tax evasion. However, Arthur Siskind, the company's general counsel, was yesterday quoted in the Washington Post stating that News Corp "is very close to resolving this. The settlement will be small, and it will be done for its nuisance value." He added that News Corp hoped to pay a settlement "in the low seven figures" to end the matter.

The two companies are reported to have agreed in principle each to buy shares of Yamaiichi International Capital Management, Japan's fourth largest broker, which collapsed two weeks ago.

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NATIONAL NEWS DIGEST
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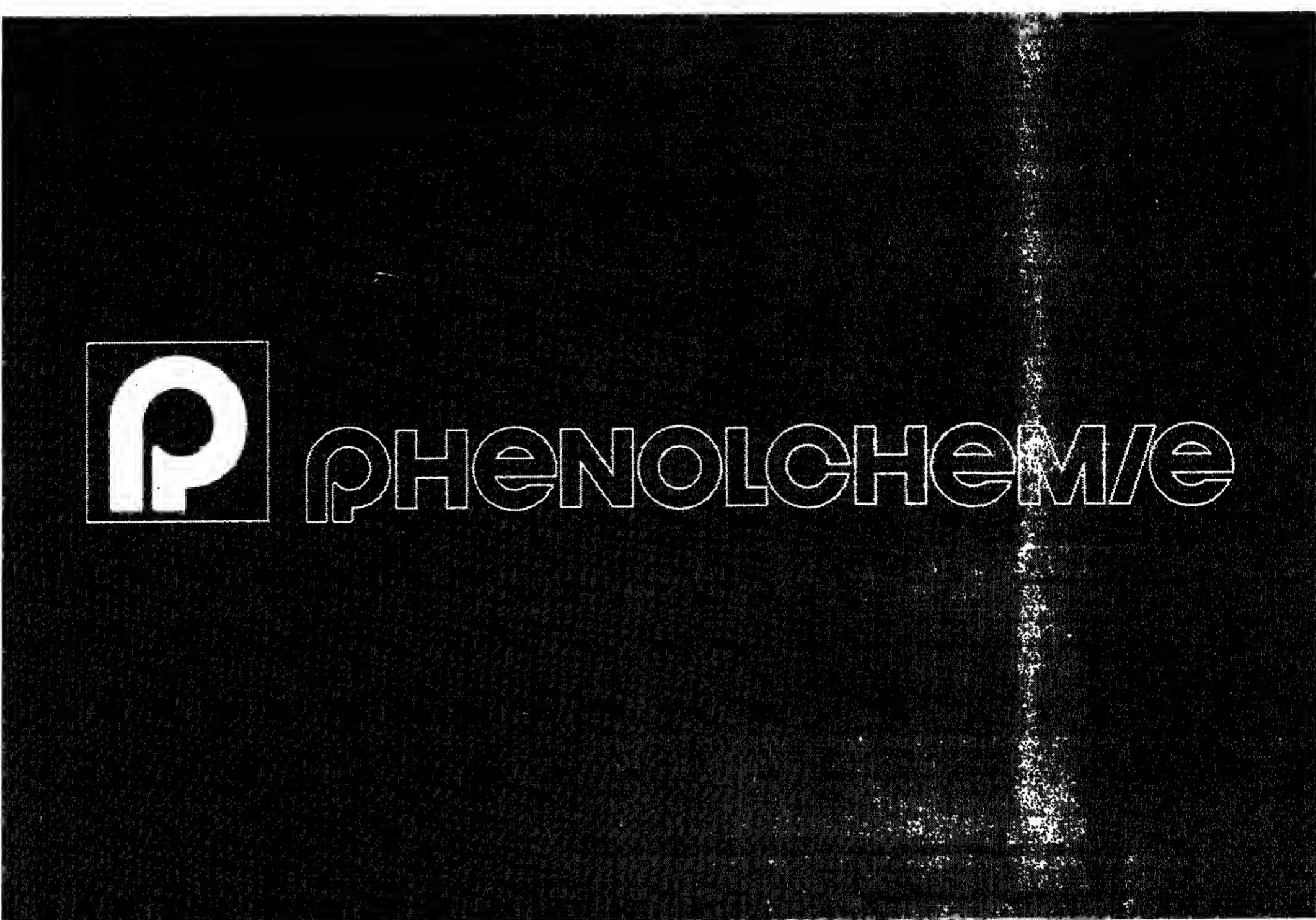
orders interest on damage

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group subject to DMSI

Re. Miller in Park Talk

Nice to meet you!



PHENOLCHEMIE

For us, the name of the game is phenol, acetone and α -methylstyrene – in fact, we're the biggest supplier worldwide. Phenolchemie GmbH & Co. KG, based in Gladbeck, Germany, brings together the activities of the Hüls Group in these business areas. We've been a separate company – market-oriented and flexible in meeting customer needs – since 1954. Our aim? To enhance our flagship position in the marketplace. Backed by our parent, Hüls AG,

the chemicals subsidiary of VEBA, we've worked systematically to build a firm foundation for our future: a committed team of 600 people, a strong position as a technology leader and a solid turnover topping DM 1 billion. In addition to our expertise in the

business, we can draw on the financial resources offered by the Hüls Group of high-performance companies. All told, excellent conditions for global success.



PHENOLCHEMIE

A Hüls Group Company

Seu Paíço em Mercados
Emergentes e de Capitais

ING BARINGS

FINANCIAL TIMES

MARKETS

THIS WEEK

At Home in Emerging
and Capital Markets

ING BARINGS

Global Investor / Simon Davies

Bargains in emerging debt

The recent Asian currency crisis has not been a great advert for investment in exotic markets, and emerging debt market investors have been hurt more than most.

The debt markets were slow to react to the growing crisis. According to a report from the Bank for International Settlements published this morning, almost \$88bn (£22.7bn) of international bonds and notes were issued by emerging market borrowers in the third quarter of the year - just short of the record achieved in the previous quarter.

But when Hong Kong caught the Asian flu in October, emerging debt markets went down rapidly, with issuers from Korea to Kazakhstan treated alike.

COMPANY RESULTS DUE

Further growth expected for Compass

Compass, which has grown to be the world's biggest food services group, is expected tomorrow to report annual profits of £188m (£230.5m), up from £114.3m. The shares have yet to regain the 735p peak hit in February, having retreated partly because of the sale of a large holding by French group Accor and partly because of currency fears. Further acquisitions are likely, but not on the scale that helped to drive the shares up from 200p just over five years ago.

The City will be disappointed at any sign of slip-

In Brazil, the benchmark yield was 380 basis points higher than US Treasuries before the crisis - at its worst the spread hit 950.

By comparison, the US long bond yield started October at 6.2 per cent, but it slipped to just below 6 per cent last Thursday, as Asian deflation was seen as deferring any US interest rate rise. Fortune has not favoured the brave.

But now that the turmoil has calmed, albeit with bond prices recapturing a slice of their losses, should investors be looking for bargains?

The BIS report says: "Notwithstanding the south-east Asian currency crisis, the on-going search for yields by international investors, in the context of ample liquidity, facilitated the absorption

of a large volume of emerging market issues."

Risk appetite may have been temporarily dulled by more recent events. Nonetheless, talk of Asian deflation can only sharpen demand for higher returns.

Bond yields have moved out of line with their ratings from the international credit rating agencies. David Beers, head of the sovereign ratings group at Standard & Poor's,

Helene Williamson, director of fixed income at Foreign & Colonial Emerging Markets, argues: "These markets will become much more mainstream, because they offer incredible diversification. For any institutional investor, this is an asset class that will have to be considered."

Fortunately, from the point of view of emerging market investors, Asia is a disproportionately small part of the debt universe, due to the region's unhealthy reliance on bank debt.

This was less fortunate for Asian economies. Countries that are more dependent on capital markets have more financial discipline forced upon them, and they have a benchmark against which to measure themselves.

Nonetheless, the volatility and lack of liquidity that investors have just witnessed suggests the need for a higher premium than they had previously demanded.

Richard Gray, emerging

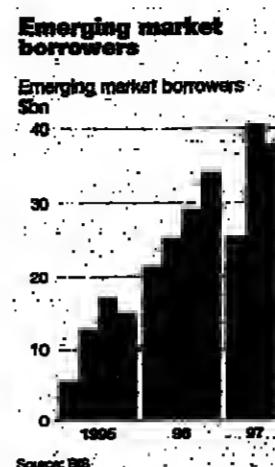
price bank loans more efficiently. Asia has clearly suffered as a result of this absence.

This is set to change. Not only will the cost of restructuring Asian economies increase demand for bond issuance particularly given the credit constraints of regional banks. But the extent of the crisis has underlined the importance of developing capital markets to ensure a more efficient allocation of capital.

Asian governments are waking up to this fact, which could substantially increase bond issuance over the coming years. And other emerging economies will similarly be encouraged to develop more broad and liquid markets.

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A rapid increase in the supply of bonds could always swamp demand. But there was substantial issuance during the second and third quarters of this year, as emerging debt markets became the latest fashion -



Total return in local currency to 04/12/97

	% change over period			
	US	Japan	Germany	France
Cash	0.11	0.06	0.07	0.12
Week	0.25	-0.03	0.18	0.15
Month	0.71	0.21	-0.88	1.53
12 months	5.68	3.64	4.03	11.52

	% change over period			
	US	Japan	Germany	France
Bonds 3-5 year	0.24	0.68	0.87	0.62
Week	1.18	0.17	2.16	1.74
Month	7.93	7.78	8.95	20.77
12 months	33.2	-17.0	41.1	58.4

Sources: Cash & Bonds - London Business. Equities - FTSE All-Share Index Unit. The FTSE Actuaries World Indices are jointly owned by FTSE International Limited, Goldman Sachs & Co., and Standard & Poor's.

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MARKETS: This Week

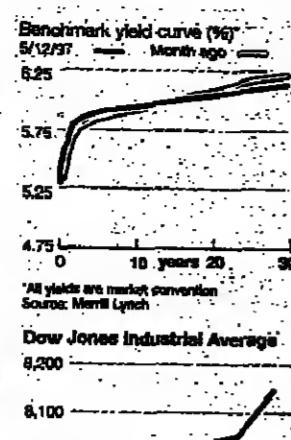
NEW YORK By John Authers

Both bond and equity markets performed strongly on Wall Street last week, in spite of continuing bad news from Asia, and further data from the US suggesting the economy was overheating. The employment report at the end of the week, which showed an unemployment rate of 4.6 per cent, the lowest since 1973, caused a noticeable rise in bond yields, but had no negative impact on stocks.

The benchmark Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied strongly on Monday and Friday, to end the week at 8,149.13, a powerful gain for the week having started at 7,923.13. It is now within almost 100 points of its all-time high, recorded in early August. The yield on the benchmark treasury long bond dipped below 6 per cent briefly on Thursday. By the end of trading on Friday it was still yielding 6.06 per cent, despite the strong employment figures.

This week sees the publication of two useful indicators to show whether the robust health of the labour market has resulted in higher prices.

Retail sales figures for November are due on Thursday, and are expected to show a distinctly buoyant rise of 0.4 per cent for the month, according to



All yields are market convention
Source: Merrill Lynch

Dow Jones Industrial Average

Source: Reuters

10 years 20 30

Dec 1997

LONDON By Philip Coggan

The UK stock market burst back into life last week, with the FTSE 100 index regaining the 5,000 level it lost in the midst of October's setback.

Some remission of Asia's problems undoubtedly helped but the main focus was domestic, with takeover activity and share buy-backs promising to put several billion pounds worth of cash back into the market. The financial sector was once again the focus of much of the bid speculation, with insurance stocks in the spotlight; traders will be on the lookout for more developments this week.

The markets even managed to shake off some much stronger-than-expected US employment data, which clearly increased the chance that the Federal Reserve would move to increase interest rates.

The state of the UK economy may become more clear from the week's spate of economic data. Today's industrial production and manufacturing output figures should show how business is bearing up in the face of the strength of sterling; but the pound should have had a beneficial effect on industry's costs, with producer input prices expected to show a 0.7 per cent month-on-month fall.

This will be followed by producer price index figures - expected to show a 0.1 per cent increase. For the first ten months of the year, the official figures show producer prices falling at a 1.2 per cent annualised rate.

Standard & Poor's MMS, the market forecaster, this week would mean a significant acceleration following declines in retail sales in September and October. Significantly stronger sales than this would probably dent the bond market.

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COMMODITIES By Gary Mead

Supply of oil from Iraq is switched off

Oil traders will be watching this week to see if Iraq's decision not to renew its oil-for-food deal with the United Nations will have any greater impact on the market.

The last six-monthly deal expired on Friday, and Iraqi oil then ceased being pumped to Ceyhan, the Turkish Mediterranean port.

Iraq's move means it will no longer benefit from receiving \$2bn of revenues

from oil exports every six months, as had been agreed under the UN-brokered deal. For some this might seem a rather perverse decision, inflicting damage only on Iraq.

But according to Peter Gilmour, head of energy at Salomon Brothers, "it's not a real surprise. A consistent Iraqi theme for many years has been an attempt to divert oil revenues into infrastructure projects

Iraq has said it would present its proposals concerning

rather than food and medicines. Saddam Hussein seems to believe that if he doesn't sell oil he's wounding his enemies as much as himself." Under the UN deal Iraq has received \$5 cents from every dollar from its oil sales, 35 cents going to fund Kuwaiti reparations and the remainder to fund the cost of UN weapons' inspections teams.

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CURRENCIES By Simon Kuper

Asian investors regain their confidence

Some Asian investors are starting to climb out of the air-raid shelters. They think the attacks on their currencies and stock markets may at last be fading. This week will tell them more.

Asian confidence rose last week after South Korea agreed a \$57bn rescue package with the International Monetary Fund. Indonesia and Thailand had already arranged IMF packages, while on Friday Malaysia revealed a hefty set of eco-

nomic reforms. Fears of unpaid debts and uncontrollable collapses of banks and companies have begun to wane.

This week Japan will make a bid to reassure the markets. On Wednesday, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's financial stabilisation committee presents a support package for Japan's stricken banks. If the package promises significant public funds, and aims for mergers between strong and weak

strategists say they point out that each Japanese package unveiled over the past few weeks has disappointed the markets.

Strategists say the authorities just refuse to see how

better their problems are. Jim O'Neill, chief currency economist at Goldman Sachs in

London, says: "It all boils down to taking a view on how crazy the Japanese ministry of finance will continue to be." He suggests that the ministry would put Alex Ferguson, manager of Manchester United Football Club, in control.

Other strategists warn

that even a large bailout package could hurt the yen on the longer term. That is because Japan is still determined to reduce its budget deficit: lots of money for

hanks might therefore mean no tax cuts for consumers, and that could leave the economy to stagnate.

Currency traders have

been only skimming economic data recently. The

main reason is that with stock markets still nervous, few expect rate rises.

Perhaps the week's most

watched figures will be US

retail sales and producer

price data for November, out on Thursday and Friday respectively.

FRANKFURT By Andrew Fisher

Although investors still have a wary eye on developments in the battered Asian financial markets, the mood in Germany is becoming more confident. The Dax blue chip index managed to break back through the 4,000 mark last week, closing on Friday at 4,191.8. This is an increase of 45 per cent on the year so far and 5 per cent over the week, a performance which Hypo Research called "noteworthy" in view

of the recent setback suffered by equities in the wake of the Asian crisis.

This week is likely to bring little in the way of

encouraging results reported recently by leading German companies. Siemens holds its annual press conference on Thursday and trading begins today in the newly quoted shares of Heidelberg Druck, the printing machinery concern.

After forecasts that unemployment could exceed 8m early next year if the winter is harsh, close attention will be paid to tomorrow's figures for November. These are expected to show a slight rise.

Retail sales for October

are also due, with a recovery

seen likely after the

holiday-induced weakness in

the previous two months.

But UBS Global Research

said the combination of a

continuing weak labour

market and tight fiscal

policy meant this rise would

mark a correction rather

than a change in trend.

However, looking beyond

the immediate figures,

J.P. Morgan said the main

theme in the German

economy in coming months

was likely to be a shift in the

composition of growth from

exports to domestic demand.

Thus it thought consumer

spending could improve in

the current quarter.

TOKYO By Tomoko Yamada

Tokyo markets will be on tenterhooks this week, following the recent wave of collapses in Japan's financial sector. In particular, attention will be focused around a package of measures that the government is expected to announce to boost confidence in banks and brokers, and the broader economy.

The measures are likely to include pledges to protect depositors in the case of a further collapse by

expanding the pool of money available for such

"insurance." But they may also include measures to support ailing banks by buying their preferential

shares or other more

broadly based pledges, to

promote financial system credibility.

If the package is strong, some observers hope it could provide the long-awaited trigger for a significant market rally. Last week the Nikkei closed at 15,224.45, after briefly breaking above the 17,000 barrier at the start of the week.

But the danger is that

reform hopes - and measures

- in Japan have often

disappointed before.

Consequently, analysts warn

that if the package proves

less substantial than hoped,

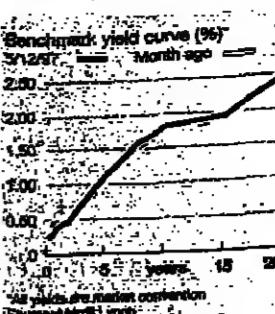
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All yields are market convention
Source: Merrill Lynch

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MARKETS: This Week

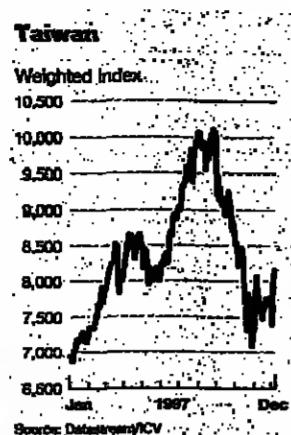
EMERGING MARKETS By Laura Tyson

Out of step with tide of woe

Taiwan's notoriously fickle stock market last week embarked on a traditional post-election rally - even though this time, the "wrong" political party won.

But the question looming over the week's heady 12 per cent share price rise is just how long the celebration will last, given uncertainties over fallout from financially wobbly Korea and Japan.

The pro-Taiwan independence Democratic Progressive party (DPP) unexpectedly defeated the ruling Nationalists in local elections on November 29, its first such victory since the country launched democratic reforms in the late 1980s. While this has no impact on national policy or relations with rival China, investors initially panicked, sending the index on a steep plunge immediately after the polls. But initial fears of a DPP-dominated administra-



Source: Datastream/ICV

tion at the local level were quickly dispelled and the benchmark index soared.

"People were surprised by the degree of support for the DPP, but the removal of political uncertainty rather than the outcome appears to have been the determining factor," said Tim Parker at Fubon Securities.

Emerging markets: IFC weekly investable price indices

Market	No. of stocks	Dec 4/8 1997		% Change over week		% Change over Dec 8/8	
		Dollar terms	1997	1997	1997	1997	1997
Latin America	(270)	673.89	+3.9	+25.5			
Argentina	(32)	1,130.97	+5.6	+15.0			
Brazil	(76)	480.28	+4.3	+2.7			
Chile	(50)	665.28	+1.2	+7.3			
Colombia*	(15)	806.37	-0.1	+27.4			
Mexico	(75)	765.50	+1.4	+1.4			
Peru	(24)	223.29	+2.5	+19.5			
Venezuela*	(12)	916.94	-1.1	+28.0			
Asia	(788)	119.17	-0.9	-8.9			
China*	(43)	59.50	+3.5	-19.3			
South Korea*	(164)	36.83	-6.7	-52.3			
Philippines	(49)	124.64	+0.3	-57.5			
Taiwan, China*	(98)	145.27	+3.5	-5.2			
India*	(72)	61.07	-3.5	+2.9			
Indonesia*	(61)	47.75	-8.4	-8.6			
Malaysia	(157)	98.98	-1.1	-1.1			
Pakistan*	(24)	256.95	+1.7	+20.0			
Sri Lanka*	(5)	103.13	-0.1	+14.8			
Thailand	(65)	57.46	-7.1	-74.0			
Euro/Mid East	(343)	144.63	+1.9	-7.8			
Czech Rep	(6)	51.42	-5.5	-26.7			
Egypt	(28)	91.28	-3.9	-			
Greece	(54)	346.48	+7.0	+43.0			
Hungary*	(13)	278.58	+13.4	+41.8			
Israel	(46)	121.82	+1.4	+4.4			
Jordan	(6)	216.07	+0.8	+15.7			
Morocco	(11)	132.03	-0.1	-			
Poland*	(30)	598.82	+5.6	-18.3			
Portugal	(23)	77.77	-0.2	+43.8			
Russia	(31)	125.88	-8.4	-			
Slovakia	(5)	97.82	+3.4	-			
South Africa*	(77)	182.41	-1.8	-12.6			
Turkey*	(58)	288.59	+4.0	+88.7			
Zimbabwe*	(10)	351.80	-13.3	-25.7			
Composites	(1,426)	246.89	+2.0	-15.4			

Indices are calculated at mid-week weekly changes are percentage movement from the previous Friday. *Datastream/ICV. **Datastream/ICV. ***Datastream/ICV. ****Datastream/ICV. *****Datastream/ICV. 1/Jan 5 1990; 4/Jan 5 1992; 2/Jan 2 1992; 4/Jan 4 1992; 6/Jan 6 1992; 8/Jan 8 1992; 10/Jan 10 1992; 12/Jan 12 1992; 14/Jan 14 1992; 16/Jan 16 1992; 18/Jan 18 1992; 20/Jan 20 1992; 22/Jan 22 1992; 24/Jan 24 1992; 26/Jan 26 1992; 28/Jan 28 1992; 30/Jan 30 1992; 1/Jan 1 1993; 3/Jan 3 1993; 5/Jan 5 1993; 7/Jan 7 1993; 9/Jan 9 1993; 11/Jan 11 1993; 13/Jan 13 1993; 15/Jan 15 1993; 17/Jan 17 1993; 19/Jan 19 1993; 21/Jan 21 1993; 23/Jan 23 1993; 25/Jan 25 1993; 27/Jan 27 1993; 29/Jan 29 1993; 31/Jan 31 1993; 2/Feb 2 1993; 4/Feb 4 1993; 6/Feb 6 1993; 8/Feb 8 1993; 10/Feb 10 1993; 12/Feb 12 1993; 14/Feb 14 1993; 16/Feb 16 1993; 18/Feb 18 1993; 20/Feb 20 1993; 22/Feb 22 1993; 24/Feb 24 1993; 26/Feb 26 1993; 28/Feb 28 1993; 1/Mar 1 1993; 3/Mar 3 1993; 5/Mar 5 1993; 7/Mar 7 1993; 9/Mar 9 1993; 11/Mar 11 1993; 13/Mar 13 1993; 15/Mar 15 1993; 17/Mar 17 1993; 19/Mar 19 1993; 21/Mar 21 1993; 23/Mar 23 1993; 25/Mar 25 1993; 27/Mar 27 1993; 29/Mar 29 1993; 31/Mar 31 1993; 2/April 2 1993; 4/April 4 1993; 6/April 6 1993; 8/April 8 1993; 10/April 10 1993; 12/April 12 1993; 14/April 14 1993; 16/April 16 1993; 18/April 18 1993; 20/April 20 1993; 22/April 22 1993; 24/April 24 1993; 26/April 26 1993; 28/April 28 1993; 30/April 30 1993; 1/May 1 1993; 3/May 3 1993; 5/May 5 1993; 7/May 7 1993; 9/May 9 1993; 11/May 11 1993; 13/May 13 1993; 15/May 15 1993; 17/May 17 1993; 19/May 19 1993; 21/May 21 1993; 23/May 23 1993; 25/May 25 1993; 27/May 27 1993; 29/May 29 1993; 31/May 31 1993; 1/Jun 1 1993; 3/Jun 3 1993; 5/Jun 5 1993; 7/Jun 7 1993; 9/Jun 9 1993; 11/Jun 11 1993; 13/Jun 13 1993; 15/Jun 15 1993; 17/Jun 17 1993; 19/Jun 19 1993; 21/Jun 21 1993; 23/Jun 23 1993; 25/Jun 25 1993; 27/Jun 27 1993; 29/Jun 29 1993; 30/Jun 30 1993; 1/July 1 1993; 3/July 3 1993; 5/July 5 1993; 7/July 7 1993; 9/July 9 1993; 11/July 11 1993; 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27/January 27 1994; 29/January 29 1994; 31/January 31 1994; 1/February 1 1994; 3/February 3 1994; 5/February 5 1994; 7/February 7 1994; 9/February 9 1994; 11/February 11 1994; 13/February 13 1994; 15/February 15 1994; 17/February 17 1994; 19/February 19 1994; 21/February 21 1994; 23/February 23 1994; 25/February 25 1994; 27/February 27 1994; 29/February 29 1994; 30/February 30 1994; 1/March 1 1994; 3/March 3 1994; 5/March 5 1994; 7/March 7 1994; 9/March 9 1994; 11/March 11 1994; 13/March 13 1994; 15/March 15 1994; 17/March 17 1994; 19/March 19 1994; 21/March 21 1994; 23/March 23 1994; 25/March 25 1994; 27/March 27 1994; 29/March 29 1994; 30/March 30 1994; 1/April 1 1994; 3/April 3 1994; 5/April 5 1994; 7/April 7 1994; 9/April 9 1994; 11/April 11 1994; 13/April 13 1994; 15/April 15 1994; 17/April 17 1994; 19/April 19 1994; 21/April 21 1994; 23/April 23 1994; 25/April 25 1994; 27/April 27 1994; 29/April 29 1994; 30/April 30 1994; 1/May 1 1994; 3/May 3 1994; 5/May 5 1994; 7/May 7 1994; 9/May 9 1994; 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LONDON SHARE SERVICE

مقدمة من الأجل

LONDON SHARE SERVICE

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Offshore Funds and Insurances

• FT Cityline Unit Trust Prices: dial 0891 430010 and key in a 5 digit code listed below. Calls are charged at 50p per minute at all times. International access available by subscription only. For more details call the FT Cityline Help Desk on (+44 171) 873 4311.

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WORLD STOCK MARKETS

FT/S&P ACTUARIES WORLD INDICES

The FT/S&P Actuaries World Indices are owned by FTSE International Limited, Goldman, Sachs & Co. and Standard & Poor's. The Indices are compiled by FTSE International Limited and Standard Poor's in conjunction with the Faculty of Actuaries and the Institute of Actuaries. NatWest Securities Ltd. was a co-founder of the Indices.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MARKETS

Number of firms of stock	Index	31/12/96	Index	Index	Index	Index	31/12/96	Yield	Index	Index	Index	Index	Index	High	Low	approx.
Australia (74)	200.18	-6.6	178.12	164.84	185.52	196.39	6.8	3.60	200.27	177.20	183.78	184.33	198.14	243.87	190.41	219.1
Austria (22)	158.95	0.0	168.93	166.24	176.05	175.99	1.95	101.56	198.46	158.66	178.31	178.31	178.31	213.59	213.59	225.8
Belgium (27)	257.03	12.8	230.01	211.41	238.23	232.95	30.8	2.96	256.71	227.14	209.94	236.26	231.33	281.11	221.31	225.8
Brazil (30)	234.78	24.3	210.99	193.95	218.53	481.78	32.8	1.55	235.83	208.40	192.61	215.78	451.55	322.44	178.98	185.7
Canada (122)	214.88	13.1	192.10	175.57	196.96	221.08	7.3	1.79	212.58	198.09	173.85	195.66	219.01	233.86	178.27	188.0
Denmark (32)	432.33	22.8	356.89	355.51	400.71	398.18	41.4	1.25	431.74	382.00	383.07	387.38	395.80	432.33	334.25	336.8
Finland (26)	205.04	20.1	284.03	242.58	273.46	333.72	40.5	1.88	266.73	261.67	241.85	272.19	332.15	340.43	232.85	241.4
France (84)	234.27	9.4	208.64	192.82	217.13	218.23	25.6	2.43	236.17	208.96	193.14	217.37	219.53	246.23	203.73	224.7
Germany (59)	228.58	20.3	204.65	188.02	211.86	211.88	38.2	1.39	228.26	201.96	186.87	210.08	210.09	243.87	183.03	186.8
Hong Kong, China (89)	385.20	-24.0	344.71	316.34	357.03	382.63	-24.0	4.18	385.25	338.21	312.60	351.82	378.70	580.03	314.78	513.1
Indonesia (27)	53.98	-58.8	84.10	77.30	57.10	281.78	-28.9	2.91	80.22	79.82	73.78	83.03	181.89	254.90	67.34	280.1
Ireland (16)	400.70	21.9	358.58	329.59	371.39	366.87	41.3	2.58	403.80	357.11	330.06	371.48	387.58	403.80	310.26	314.3
Italy (53)	111.31	33.3	98.81	81.56	103.17	145.14	53.1	1.68	111.82	98.94	91.45	102.92	144.86	115.27	79.11	121.1
Japan (482)	98.38	-23.0	88.93	81.74	92.11	81.74	-13.7	0.97	99.22	87.79	81.14	91.32	97.14	141.12	85.91	140.1
Malaysia (107)	180.53	-70.1	161.55	148.49	176.33	260.35	-55.6	2.80	175.47	155.26	143.50	161.50	251.75	560.85	172.21	586.7
Mexico (27)	1726.11	41.5	1544.87	1419.78	1559.85	15385.90	48.4	1.58	1795.23	15388.89	1422.33	1600.80	15417.03	1901.98	1147.98	1218.6
Netherlands (19)	412.28	22.8	398.95	339.12	382.12	378.04	42.1	2.22	412.20	384.71	337.09	379.39	375.22	440.67	318.73	321.4
New Zealand (14)	82.40	-70.2	73.74	87.78	76.37	72.84	5.6	4.24	82.51	73.08	67.56	78.03	72.75	98.47	78.37	93.3
Norway (36)	327.58	10.8	293.13	269.43	303.60	321.08	25.4	1.90	327.82	280.05	268.09	301.79	318.79	374.84	277.33	284.5
Philippines (22)	88.25	-50.2	78.87	73.41	82.72	156.87	-41.4	1.32	84.78	75.03	69.34	78.05	148.85	214.07	78.40	203.0
Singapore (42)	257.55	-38.8	230.49	211.95	238.72	191.87	-29.1	1.67	233.48	224.28	207.29	233.30	188.45	448.01	215.21	420.0
South Africa (43)	262.37	-17.8	234.79	215.81	243.18	278.59	-14.1	3.11	268.89	237.74	219.73	247.30	285.81	370.12	250.47	325.0
Spain (59)	272.43	23.9	243.78	224.08	252.50	310.85	43.4	2.18	273.21	241.74	223.49	261.47	308.85	277.33	188.82	202.2
Sweden (49)	485.17	15.0	434.17	399.07	449.68	582.33	31.9	1.84	492.59	495.84	402.83	458.38	586.51	538.94	402.43	415.1
Switzerland (32)	332.07	99.2	297.16	273.14	307.78	296.37	49.2	1.13	331.98	283.74	271.48	305.56	294.67	332.07	231.60	241.8
Thailand (39)	24.34	-74.7	21.58	19.94	22.47	38.28	-58.8	7.23	24.24	21.45	19.82	22.31	39.28	108.20	108.81	108.81
United Kingdom (215)	394.23	78.0	289.10	274.92	308.78	299.10	21.9	3.30	334.14	286.85	273.28	307.54	295.85	337.98	281.80	284.9
USA (542)	401.22	92.9	359.04	330.01	371.87	401.22	92.9	1.54	386.95	351.23	324.03	385.36	396.85	401.22	203.42	302.9

NORTH AMERICA

NORTH AMERICA

TORONTO (Pac 5 / Cen S)
4 per close

188310 AdmC x 20
82455 AdmG

17455 Approx
63955 At Cor
34448 Atcor
33381 Atcor x

250127	Aero 5	13
27000	Aero 5	32
32000	Aero 5	2
35000	RQ T-1	

[Second Chance Pet Food](#)

NOTES - Prices

police. "Cohen was suspended, and Eric Cohen was fired, as Eric, 1 Police

2 FT Free Animal

For CIOs looking for competitive positioning on this page, American computers 7-202-8087 or 100-3007.

or older prints of May
For customers from AU
770 W770 or 880 year

37 37 37

NOTES - Prices on this page are as quoted on the individual exchanges and are subject to fluided prices." Column per High and Low. 5 Dailings suspended, so Ex (suspended), so Ex (stop losses), or Ex (stop). 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137

A one-class December 6

NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES

GLOBAL EQUITY MARKETS

US INDICES

Dow Jones	Dec 5	Dec 4	Dec 3	High	Low	Since compilation		
Industrials	8148.13	8050.10	8022.01	8259.31	8311.29	8229.31	41.22	
Home Bonds	104.86	104.56	104.32	104.95	101.09	104.98	54.88	
Transport	3375.94	3305.64	3280.64	3288.27	2222.07	3358.27	13.23	
Morries	258.89	258.26	258.45	261.16	229.47	261.18	16.33	
DJ Ind. Day's high	8209.56	(8159.50)	Low	7820.04	(7978.30)	(Theoretical)		
Standard and Poors Composite	983.79	973.10	975.77	982.29	737.01	982.79	4.40	
Industrial	1140.07	1125.90	1133.35	1146.22	855.42	1146.22	3.52	
Finance	120.78	119.87	119.03	120.78	80.75	120.78	7.13	
Others	NYSE Comp.	514.31	508.44	510.15	514.31	389.47	514.31	4.54
Asset Comp.	570.27	665.80	662.10	721.90	541.20	721.80	524.20	
NASDAQ Comp	1633.00	1613.42	1615.13	1745.55	1201.00	1745.55	54.87	
Russell 2000	438.05	434.91	433.81	465.21	335.85	465.21	123.36	

US DATA

I MARKET ACTIVITY

Day	Volume (million)	NYSE	Issues Traded	Dec 5	Dec 4	Dec 3
Mon	48	3,421	3,443	3,443		
Tues	561,253	537,096	534,470	534,470		
Wed		1,722	1,554	1,552		
Thurs		1,167	1,340	1,253		
Fri		532	549	538		
Total		108	257	222		
New Highs		48	53	54		

II NYSE TRADING ACTIVITY

Volume : 561,253,000

III ACTIVE STOCKS

Friday	Stocks traded	Close price	Day's change
UPS	6,846,300	842	+%
Citgo Res	5,300,100	154	+%
Hew-Purd	5,074,100	574	+%
Telecom	4,278,200	58	+%
Fleet Fin	4,234,000	712	+%
Trans Int	4,177,000	454	+%
Texaco	3,951,000	557	+%
First Data	3,853,200	291	+%
Bectel	3,702,500	523	+%
Eaton	3,644,000	64	+%

IV BIGGEST MOVERS

Friday	Stocks traded	Close price	Day's change	Day's chg %
UPS	6,846,300	842	+%	+16
Exxon Int	415	415	+0.6	+1.4
Macys	365	365	+0.6	+1.6
Kodak Int'l & E	121	116	-5	-12.9
AT&T	14	14	+0	+12.1
Motorola	1,426,000	208	+7	+4.2
Motor Co	1,421,000	208	+7	+4.2
Motorola	1,421,000	210.0	+0	+0.0
Motor Co	1,385,371	210.0	+0	+0.0
Motorola	700	700	+0	+0.0
Motor Co	71.65	71.65	+0	+0.0
Motorola	498	498	+0	+0.0

V BIGGEST MOVERS

Friday	Stocks traded	Close price	Day's change	Day's chg %
AT&T	1,421,000	210.0	+0	+0.0
Motor Co	1,385,371	210.0	+0	+0.0
Motorola	700	700	+0	+0.0
Motor Co	71.65	71.65	+0	+0.0
Motorola	498	498	+0	+0.0

Dow Jones

8,200

JAPAN

Dec 5

Day	High	Low	Since compilation	
Mon	3,681.48	3,636.79	3,635.51	3,681.48
Tues	3,682.52	3,683.8	3,683.8	3,682.52
Wed	3,684.07	3,684.07	3,684.07	3,684.07
Thurs	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97
Fri	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97

FRANCE

Dec 5

Day	High	Low	Since compilation	
Mon	3,684.07	3,684.07	3,684.07	3,684.07
Tues	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97
Wed	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97
Thurs	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97
Fri	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97	3,684.97

INDEX FUTURES

WORLD MARKETS AT A GLANCE									
	Open	Sett price	Change	High	Low	Est. vol.	Open int.		
S&P 500	976.50	986.50	+9.70	988.90	965.10	141,311	323,843		
Dec	981.00	987.70	+9.60	1000.00	981.00	34,873	85,593		
Nikkei 225	16420.0	16460.0	+70.0	16540.0	16350.0	34,725	125,727		
Dec	16430.0	16500.0	+130.0	16630.0	16380.0	26,519	66,582		
Open Interest figures for previous day.									
CAC-40 (200 x Index)	2919.0	2918.0	-7.0	2955.0	2888.0	20,018	44,193		
Dec	2927.0	2925.0	-7.0	2952.0	2927.0	11	4,584		
DAX	4143.0	4195.0	+52.0	4202.5	4121.0	22,118	71,006		
Dec	4162.0	4232.0	+20.0	4236.0	4162.0	624	10,242		
OMX	2506.00	2483.00	-29.00	2517.00	2489.00	7,740	27,048		
Dec	2520.75	2492.00	-13.00	2520.00	2480.00	582	804		
SOFIPEX	5968.0	6003.0	+38.0	6048.0	5956.0	5,118	70,439		
Dec	6040.0	6016.0	+37.0	6040.0	6040.0	50	1,894		

WORLD MARKETS AT A GLANCE

Country	Index	Dec 5	Dec 4	Dec 3	1997 High	1997 Low	± Yield	± P/E	Country	Index	Dec 5	Dec 4	Dec 3	1997 High	1997 Low	± Yield	± P/E	Country	Index	Dec 5	Dec 4	Dec 3	1997 High	1997 Low	± Yield	± P/E						
Argentina	General	23347.82	22075.43	22785.52	25771.70	2210	-1227.37	21	3.2	193	Hong Kong	Baix	7270.02	7125.56	6917.73	8482.80	63	-4201.36	61	0.0	0.0	Poland	WIG	151.215	145.72	148.33	1839.40	152	-14223.70	2511	1.7	129
Sociedad General	Wall Street higher, basking gains for the week 10.5 per cent.									Shares ended 2 per cent higher with dealers seeing gains across the board.								Shares rose for the sixth session running, but analysts said there was still little sign of foreign interest.														
Australia	All Ordinaries	2557.2	2552.5	2562.4	2752.20	259	-2202.20	2610	3.57	184	India	BSE Sens.	3469.08	3521.16	3552.37	4540.02	58	-3225.34	21	0.0	0.0	Portugal	BAL 30	3684.72	3582.36	3664.33	3686.01	316	-2168.07	21	1.84	355
All Mining	5762	5768	5852	587.10	242	541.18	2771			Dax 30	633.22	649.08	655.15	843.28	58	-622.71	21	0.0	0.0	Saudi	PSI 20	8571.40	8575.46	8530.82	8603.92	310	-8162.34	21				
Closely watched gold index pared early losses to finish 1.8 per cent lower after touching lowest levels since May 1995.										Absence of foreign support and general end-of-year tax review affected shares.								Absence of foreign support and general end-of-year tax review affected shares.														
Austria	Credit Action	445.8	446.19	439.27	434.42	270	374.40	91	1.98	151	Indonesia	Jakarta Corp.	414.78	401.93	388.68	740.83	87	-388.68	312	2.93	116	Russia	RTS	382.42	361.79	343.22	371.08	610	-213.38	61	0.0	0.0

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NASDAQ NATIONAL MARKET

4 pm close December 3

NASDAQ NATIONAL MARKET												NASDAQ NATIONAL MARKET																													
Stock	P/I						P/I						P/I						P/I																						
	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg													
ACC Corp	140	9335	400	45	47	47	47	Stock	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg	Stock	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg	Stock	Div.	E	100s	High	Low	Last	Closg										
Action II	2407	47	47	47	47	47	47	Converge	Div.	84	15	369	361	35	364	-1	Fleet	Div.	5913	31	39	31	31	+1	Stock	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	8	482	154	172	152	+2	
Action Co	31	446	162	164	165	165	165	Converge S	Div.	17	20	120	120	124	124	-1	Fleet Am	Div.	80	30	2700	55	52	54	-4	Orion	Div.	46	48	12	12	12	-1	Stock	Div.	10	15	104	111	111	-1
Amplus	45	4516	40	40	40	40	40	Converge	Div.	21	21	52	51	51	51	-1	Fleet Co	Div.	101	21	245	305	305	305	-1	Orion	Div.	51	357	5	5	5	-1	Stock	Div.	19	122	134	132	132	-1
ADCTel	45	4516	37	37	37	37	37	Converge	Div.	22	22	347	347	347	347	-1	Fleet F	Div.	132	21	402	25	25	25	-1	Orion	Div.	51	357	5	5	5	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1
Aerocon OH	0.57	38	37	37	37	37	37	Converge	Div.	13	12	10	10	174	172	-2	Fleet F	Div.	132	21	402	25	25	25	-1	Orion	Div.	51	357	5	5	5	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1
Aeros	0.20	18	772	41	40	41	41	Converge	Div.	13	12	50	50	50	50	-1	Fleet F	Div.	132	21	402	25	25	25	-1	Orion	Div.	51	357	5	5	5	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1
Aerovate	44	47	44	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	100	17	250	84	84	84	-1	Fleet G	Div.	15	25	300	0	0	0	-1	Orion	Div.	7	7	4	4	4	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1
Adwest	844	47	87	89	89	89	89	Converge	Div.	1504	53	53	53	53	53	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	8	482	154	172	152	+2	
Adwest	100	18	361	27	27	27	27	Converge	Div.	1008	47	47	47	47	47	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.30	30	30	30	30	30	30	Converge	Div.	1008	47	47	47	47	47	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	1.70	10	24	85	85	85	85	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.85	15	85	27	27	27	27	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	21	190	30	30	30	30	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45	45	45	45	45	-1	Fleet G	Div.	1513	31	39	31	31	+1	Orion	Div.	16	52	33	31	31	-1	Stock	Div.	10	12	104	104	104	-1	
Adwest	0.80	18	5	44	44	44	44	Converge	Div.	1010	45</td																														

AMEX PRICES

-4 pm close December

FT GUIDE TO THE WEEK

MONDAY 8

Marketing gas

EU energy ministers meeting in Brussels will try to agree plans to open Europe's \$100bn-a-year natural gas market to competition. After eight years of discussion, and a renewed push for agreement since last year's deal on liberalisation of the electricity market, a compromise plan has largely been agreed. The key question remains the extent to which the market would be opened to competition, and which customers would be eligible to shop around for gas supplies. Luxembourg, holder of the EU presidency, proposes opening about 23 per cent of the market - accounted for by the largest energy users in each EU state - initially, rising to 28 per cent after five years, and 33 per cent after 10 years, similar to the pattern of the electricity directive.

Gore takes the heat



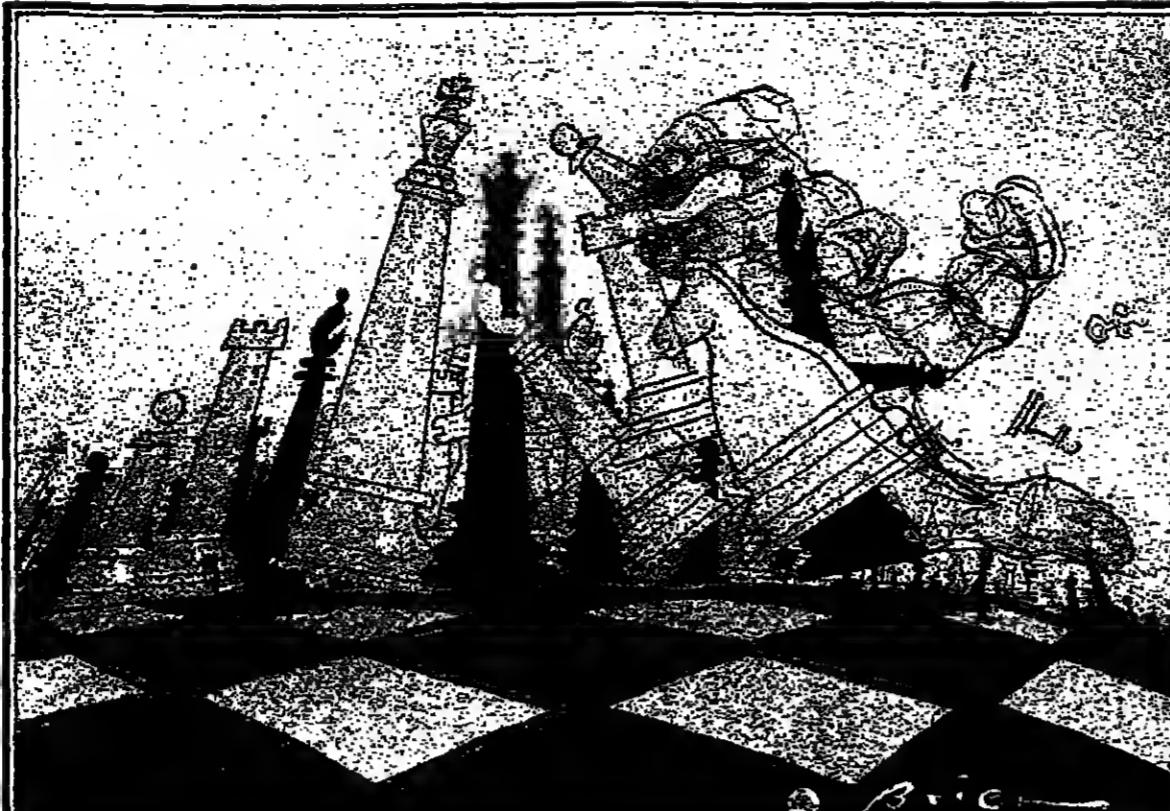
Al Gore, US vice-president, makes a one-day trip to Kyoto to meet international delegates at the UN climate change conference on Monday, when ministerial-level meetings start to round up last week's talks. Mr Gore will give a speech which delegates hope may break the deadlock in the negotiations. The 10-day conference is scheduled to end on Wednesday with agreement on targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions, but progress has been slow. The US has demanded participation by developing countries as a precondition for signing the agreement, and Mr Gore said last week that the US was prepared to walk away from an unsatisfactory agreement.

Mating game

Controversy has already marred the first world chess championship played on the knock-out system, at Groningen, Netherlands. Nearly 100 grandmasters compete for the right to challenge the Russian holder Anatoly Karpov in next month's final. World number one Garry Kasparov has refused to take part, while world number two Vladimir Kramnik has also withdrawn on the grounds that Karpov has an unfair advantage. The record \$5m prize fund is guaranteed by Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, president of the International Chess Federation and ruler of the Caucasian republic of Kalmykia, where critics allege that oil and caviar revenues are being squandered on off-beat projects such as the newly constructed Chess City.

Refugee count

The United Nations refugee agency publishes its annual report on the state of the world's refugees. The Geneva-based UN High Commissioner for Refugees has been forced to cut



Chess grandmasters Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik have checked out of the first world championship to be run as a knock-out

budgets next year because funding has fallen along with declining refugee emergencies. However, the report points out that the numbers of internally displaced and stateless people are rising and, unlike refugees fleeing across national borders, they often have little or no access to international assistance. The UNHCR has a current caseload of about 23m refugees and displaced people, down from 26m in early 1996.

Foreign affairs

EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels to prepare for this week's EU summit in Luxembourg, where plans for eastern enlargement are at the top of the agenda. Ministers will also discuss the follow-up to last week's summit with the US and Canada.

Holidays

Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guam, Italy, Liechtenstein, Macau, Malta, Monaco, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, San Marino, Seychelles, Spain, Switzerland, Vatican City, Venezuela.

Surveys

China; World Pulp and Paper.

TUESDAY 9

Deadline Bosnia

Bosnia's ethnic communities will come under strong pressure to settle quickly the many remaining disputes hampering reintegration of their war-shattered country. The western powers which, together with Russia and Japan, make up the Bosnian Peace

Implementation Council are expected to call at their two-day meeting in Bonn for Serbs, Moslems and Croats to agree common citizenship, passport and car registration laws by December 15, and currency and customs arrangements and a new national flag by December 20. Earlier deadlines have been ignored by the Bosnian Serb republic and the Moslem-Croat federation.

European diagnosis

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe publishes its latest economic assessment of Europe's economies. The UN/ECE, which has traditionally focused on central and eastern Europe, says that aggregate output has grown this year in the transition economies for the first time since the collapse of communism in 1989. In particular, the economic decline in Russia appears to have ended - though there is no sign of the promised recovery. Most other countries in the region have seen positive growth in the past two years.

Korean settlement bid

Historic negotiations on a permanent settlement to the Korean conflict begin in Geneva between North and South Korea, the US and China. The four-party talks, hosted by the Swiss government, kick off with a two-day opening session, but diplomats say they could last for months or years.

Islamic summit

Some 2,000 official delegates are expected to attend the three-day summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Tehran, including 35 heads of state from Moslem countries.

Another 15 delegations of "special guests" have been invited. The 55-member organisation's summit will discuss regional issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and Afghanistan and ways of improving trade and economic relations between Islamic countries.

Russia's WTO application

The World Trade Organisation working party considering Russia's membership application meets in Geneva. The talks are moving more slowly than hoped because of delays by Moscow in producing offers to open up its domestic market for goods and services. Russia and the US agreed earlier this year that they would aim for Russian entry in 1998, but this now looks an unlikely prospect.

Survey

Hungary.

WEDNESDAY 10

Labour facing revolt



Britain's Labour government faces its first serious backbench revolt since the election in a vote to cut benefits to lone parents. Ministers' decision to go ahead

parents. Ministers' decision to go ahead

ECONOMIC DIARY

Statistics to be released this week

Day Released Country	Economic Statistic	Median Forecast	Previous Actual	Day Released Country	Economic Statistic	Median Forecast	Previous Actual
Mon UK	Oct industrial production*	0.3%	-0.2%	Dec 11 US	Nov retail sales	0.4%	-0.2%
Dec 8 UK	Oct industrial production**	2.1%	1.5%	US	Nov retail sales ex-auto	0.2%	0.4%
UK	Oct manufacturing output*	0.2%	0.2%	US	Initial claims Dec 6	310k	303k
UK	Oct manufacturing output**	1.5%	1.5%	US	State benefits Nov 29	2212k	
UK	Nov producer price index input*	-0.7%	-0.2%	US	Nov export price index	-0.3%	
UK	Nov producer price index input**	-8.4%	-8.5%	US	Nov import price index	0.1%	
UK	Nov producer price index output*	0.1%	0.1%	US	M1 week ended Dec 1	\$4.0bn	\$4.8bn
UK	Nov producer price index output**	1.2%	1.2%	US	M2 week ended Dec 1	\$4.3bn	\$6.5bn
UK	Nov prdr pce inc ex fd, drink & tobacco*	0.9%	0.8%	US	Nov monthly M1	\$1.0bn	-\$3.2bn
Tues Japan	Oct machinery orders ex elec & ships**	-15.5%	1.3%	US	Nov monthly M2	\$17.0bn	\$16.3bn
Dec 8 Japan	Oct machinery orders ex elec & ships	15.0%	-12.3%	Fri US	Nov producer price index	0.1%	0.1%
UK	Nov British Retail Cons household surv	5.0%		Dec 12 US	Nov prdr pce index ex food & energy 0.1%	-UNCH	
Germany	Nov unemployment† pan Germany	15k	16k	US	Oct business inventories	0.3%	0.7%
Germany	Nov unemployment‡ west	Ok	5k	US	Nov Atlanta Fed index	17.7	
Germany	Nov unemployment‡ east	15k	16k	US	Dec Michigan Sentiment pre**	107.0	107.2
Germany	Sep employment‡ west	-4k	-4k	US	Nov bank credit	10.9%	
UK	Nov retail price index*	0.1%	0.1%	US	Nov commercial and industrial loans	10.9%	
UK	Nov retail price index**	3.7%	3.7%	Sun Japan	Dec Bank of Japan Tankan survey	N/A	
Japan	Oct trade balance (IMF) not†	Y649bn		Dec 14 Japan	'97 Tankan capital spending	4.0%	-4.6%
Wed France	Q3 non farm payroll final	0.2%	0.2%	During the week...			
Dec 10 Italy	Sep EU trade balance	L0.6 trillion	L0.2trillion	Germany	Nov cost of living † pan Germany	0.1%	-0.1%
Italy	Oct ex-EU trade balance	L4.8 trillion	L1.0trillion	Germany	Nov cost of living ‡ pan Germany	2.0%	1.8%
US	Q3 current account	-\$39.0bn		Germany	Oct retail sales, real not†**	1.0%	-1.1%
US	Oct wholesale sales	2.3%		Germany	Oct retail sales, real not†	-2.4%	
Thurs UK	Dec CBI industrial trends	N/A					

*month on month, **year on year † seasonally adjusted

Statistics, courtesy Standard & Poor's MAFS.

Other economic news

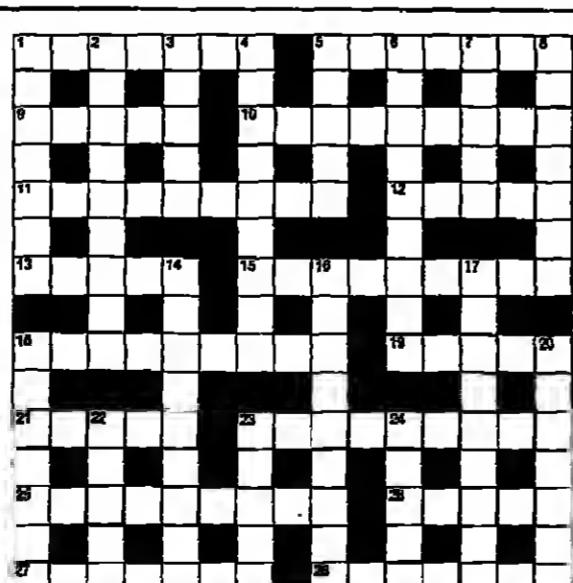
Monday: The appreciation of sterling may have had a mixed effect on UK producer prices for November. Input prices may have been affected by the strength of the pound, while output prices could have risen by a notch during the month. Tuesday: German unemployment remains on a rising trend, both in the seasonally adjusted series and the headline figures. Unemployment is expected to have risen during November partly due to the phasing-out of labour market schemes. Wednesday: Observers expect little, if any, change in French consumer prices during November. This would translate into an annual inflation rate of around 1.1 per cent, after 1.0 per cent in October. Thursday: US retail sales in November are expected to have rebounded across the spectrum. Spending on durables should have been lifted by higher vehicle sales and housing-related purchases. Friday: Observers are forecasting only a moderate increase in US producer prices for November. Average expectations are for a monthly rise of 0.1 per cent.

ACROSS

- They nick money? (7)
- Having broken rib, feel delicious? (7)
- Two kings embracing are not seen so often (5)
- Keeps on, showing stamina in trouble (9)
- Ship's name spoilt by being crooked (9)
- Ancient ring many study (5)
- Drop a catch in the close (5)
- Faint possibility of being caught at cover? (3-6)
- Apathy shown for one French enterprise (9)
- Draw cheque (5)
- Convict about to turn to drink (5)
- Account includes a single wrong number (9)
- Its absence is plain to see (9)
- In a way age is some protection (5)
- The loss-making accommodation for students (7)
- Revolutionary means of power on board (7)

DOWN

- A sweet shade of brown (7)
- Like mistletoe? Patricia's going out for it (9)
- Huge cost of electrical safety precaution (5)
- Army signalling? (9)
- Act gladly for an audience (5)
- Promised to join a union (9)
- Work I mislead (5)
- Conceptration points to sound state of mind (7)
- Straying in herd can result in obstruction (9)
- A fact isn't treated as fanciful (9)
- Poor vision means some listeners are kept in the dark (4-5)
- 88 sun site that's distributed free? (7)
- Friar's at home and eats heartily (5,2)
- Bough number (5)
- Helps a beast in distress (5)
- Cet bold of a key file (5)



WINNERS 9.540: D. Cashman, London NW8; A.R. Hall, Yetminster, Dorset; A. Johns, Loughborough, Leicestershire; J.C. Swann, Shortwood, Gloucestershire.

MONDAY PRIZE CROSSWORD

No.9.552 Set by DANTE

Six bottles of Davys Celebration Champagne for the first correct solution opened and three runner-up prizes of £40 Davys food and wine vouchers redeemable in England or Wales. Winners will receive a set of six plated plate name bases and cards. Solutions by Thursday December 11 to: Monday Monday Crossword 9.552 on the envelope, to the Financial Times, 1 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL. Solution on Monday December 22. Please allow 28 days for delivery of prizes.

Name _____
Address _____

Solution 9.540

PENITENT PILOTAGE
ADOLESCENT
PAROKISM ASSIST
EOICSIITA
RAINCHECK FRAME
YCINITY
WEST DRIVERS
GGBR
RAYDING SIGH
UHCAGA
MANNA GEOMETRIC
FAIR AT RTG
LESSON UPTHRUST
ETRE EEEH
DESIRIB PUBLISHING

with the cuts, proposed by the previous Conservative government, prompted more than 100 Labour MPs to write a private letter to Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the exchequer, calling for the plans to be postponed. Some were placated by Mr Brown's Green Budget plans to pump £300m into childcare and helping long parents find jobs. A number of Labour members are expected to vote against the measure or abstain.

women in management which shows that women are still failing to break through the so-called "glass ceiling" barring them from top jobs.

Holiday

Burkina Faso.

Survey

FT Exporter.

FRIDAY 12

Enlargement summit

EU leaders meet in Luxembourg for a two-day summit which is expected to select a short-list of countries from central and eastern Europe that are ready to open negotiations in March 1998 on entry to the Union around the turn of the century. The favoured countries are expected to be the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia, to be joined by Cyprus. EU leaders will agree special assistance to Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia and offer the disappointed countries the possibility of a review of their applications in a year's time. The 15 heads of government will try to placate Turkey with the promise of inclusion in a pan-European conference next year.

Financial services pact

Today is the deadline for concluding a World Trade Organisation pact on liberalising global financial services markets. Negotiators will have been working round the clock to squeeze out the maximum improvements in foreign access to trading partners' banking, insurance and securities sectors. But the final say will lie with Washington, which walked away from an earlier deal in 1985.

Holidays

Kenya, Mexico, Russian Federation.

Surveys

Employee Benefits; Turkish Finance and Industry.

SUNDAY 14

Czech conference

The Czech Civic Democratic party, which has led the country since 1992, holds an extraordinary conference to elect a new leader after the resignation of prime minister Vaclav Klaus last month over a corporate donation scandal. Mr Klaus has said he will stand again and so far no serious rival candidate has come forward. The conference is likely to be bitter, with a division between Mr Klaus and other senior members of the party, and between regional party members, who are thought to back Mr Klaus, and deputies, most of whom want him to step down. If Mr Klaus is re-elected, the party could split and early elections will be likely.

Compiled by Roger Beale.
Fax: (+44) (0)171 873 5196.

Prices for electricity determined by the government for the supply of electricity and for the generation and transmission of electricity in England and Wales		Prices for electricity determined for the supply of electricity and for the generation and transmission of electricity in England and Wales	
Price on 07.12			

China

The 'soft landing' is becoming bumpier as the economy throws up difficulties. Tony Walker and James Harding report

Key stage on long march to market

China stands at a crossroads in its transition from centrally planned to market economy, and the next year is likely to prove critical in its efforts to advance reforms.

The leadership might have expected an easier ride after a difficult year politically, but economic turmoil in Asia and signs of slowdown in China's own economy mean the next period will prove especially challenging.

China cannot escape regional turbulence. Its leaders face a monumental task managing the fallout, ranging from shrinking markets for China's own products to stiffer export competition from countries whose currencies have been devalued.

At the same time, Beijing is being thrust into a leadership role in helping to stabilise regional economies. These additional responsibilities are testing China's abilities to act and think globally at a time when it is mired in its own deep-seated economic problems.

A year ago, China's leaders were congratulating themselves on having achieved a "soft landing" for an economy which had experienced severe overheating: inflation was down to single digits from a high in 1994 of 24 per cent and, more importantly, Beijing had achieved this feat without sacrificing growth.

It had all seemed too good to be true: now, it appears, a soft landing is becoming

bumpier, and China's economic managers are perhaps understanding better how difficult it is to "fine tune" an economy while advancing reforms which themselves are disruptive.

The leadership needs to show boldness in the next phase of the transition to a market system; but nerves will be frayed by regional uncertainties and risks of domestic turmoil from state sector reform which must be tackled if China is to move forward.

There are few easy choices if China is to realise its undoubted potential. Deng Xiaoping's legacy is fragile. Loss of momentum in reforms at this critical time could be catastrophic.

The successful October summit in Washington between Chinese and US leaders held out hope that the most important bilateral relationship of the post-Cold War era will achieve maturity and a degree of certainty at a time when it is mired in its own deep-seated economic problems.

By the middle of next century, at the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country will have become a "prosperous, strong democratic and culturally advanced socialist country", according to Mr Jiang.

It will take more than words to achieve such a result, but China continues to make significant progress towards achieving its aims. Its leaders appear to have

handled well the transition to a post-Deng era.

The death in February of the father of China's reforms raised concerns about drift, but in the event the leadership hardly missed a beat.

Deng's passing cleared the way for Mr Jiang to assert control in his own right as first among equals in a collective. The old man's lingering departure had weighed heavily on the leadership and decision-making.

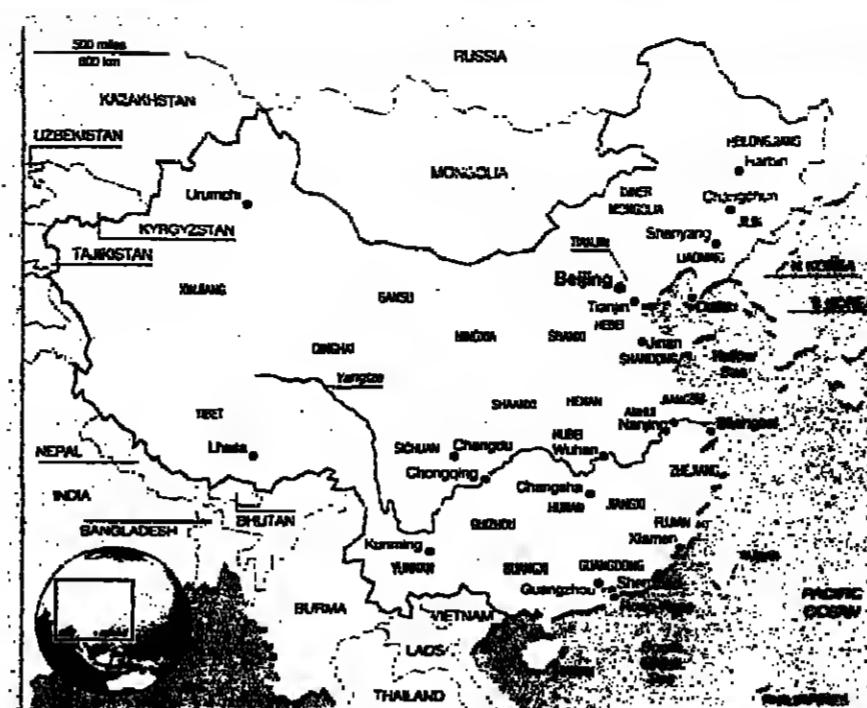
Irrespective of Deng, 1997 was always going to be a watershed. The July 1 handover of Hong Kong helped to define the year, and September's party congress gave it political significance.

China can hardly be accused of lacking ambition. President Jiang Zemin in his report on September 12 to the 15th National Congress of the Communist party set as a goal for the first decade of the new millennium a doubling of gross national product.

A joint call for a "constructive strategic partnership" makes sense, although tensions will inevitably persist over such issues as human rights, trade, Taiwan and arms proliferation.

On a wider international stage, Beijing was also active, seeking to re-define a multipolar post-Cold War world in which US domination is checked and China's role as an emerging economic force is recognised.

Chinese assertiveness internationally is becoming more apparent as its



Constitution

- Parts of government
- One-party rule by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
- The NPC: 2,970 delegates elected by the people to represent the various regions and the armed forces; elects the president and members of the State Council and the members of the Standing Committee of the NPC, which meets when the NPC is not in session.
- Head of state
- President (currently Jiang Zemin) and vice-president are elected for a maximum of three consecutive five-year terms by the NPC

- National legislature
- Unicameral National People's Congress (NPC): 2,970 delegates elected by the people to represent the various regions and the armed forces; elects the president and members of the State Council and the members of the Standing Committee of the NPC, which meets when the NPC is not in session.
- Local elections
- NPC elects the president and members of the State Council and the members of the Standing Committee of the NPC, which meets when the NPC is not in session.
- Head of state
- President (currently Jiang Zemin) and vice-president are elected for a maximum of three consecutive five-year terms by the NPC

- Regions elect local People's Congresses and are administered by People's Governments
- Government
- Local elections
- NPC elects the president and members of the State Council and the members of the Standing Committee of the NPC, which meets when the NPC is not in session.
- Head of state
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self-confidence grows. Its lead in arranging four-party peace talks aimed at ending the state of war on the Korean peninsula is a case in point.

Its participation in International Monetary Fund-sponsored efforts to bail out the Thai and Indonesian economies is also significant for a country which until the 1980s was virtually closed to the outside world.

China's full integration into the global system may be some way off, but 1997 witnessed further advances.

Membership of the World Trade Organisation remains elusive, although negotiators report progress. Warmer ties between Beijing and Washington may be helpful.

Politically, a post-Deng leadership took shape with a new politburo approved by September's party congress.

The politburo's seven-man standing committee, the body which effectively runs China, is broadly reformist

and is unlikely to deviate far from Deng's blueprint.

The party gathering, a seminal event held at five-year intervals, consolidated Mr Jiang's control.

The conclave also endorsed Zhu Rongji as prime minister by moving him to number three in the hierarchy behind Mr Jiang and Li Peng, the outgoing premier.

Mr Zhu's promotion will be welcomed by western business which sees him as "results-oriented".

A new government for the next five years with Mr Zhu at its head will be "elected" by a National People's Congress or parliament, meeting next March. A big turnover of heads of ministries and commissions is certain under Mr Zhu who is known for applying rigorous standards.

But even before the new administration is formed Mr Zhu who, as executive vice-premier, is broadly responsible for the economy, faces a

worrying period. A marked slowdown in third-quarter growth and signs of deflation - retail prices in October were up 0.4 per cent - have placed the spotlight on policies which appear biased towards curbing inflation rather than encouraging economic activity.

China will achieve its growth targets for the year of 8 to 9 per cent, but this almost certainly overstates the real rate of growth which is probably 1 or 2 percentage points lower due to inefficiencies in the system, characterised by a continuing build-up of unsold goods.

Allied with these worries are signs that the dynamic non-state sector is losing steam. For the first time since 1989, growth in investment this year by urban cooperatives and township and village enterprises, which account for 40 per cent of the gross value of industrial output, was less than that for industry generally.

There is also little sign of improvement in the state sector with half China's state-owned enterprises in the red, and many of the rest barely breaking even. Unemployment is becoming worse with sporadic outbreaks of worker unrest more prevalent.

Concerns about unrest among laid-off workers are one of the main constraints on reforms of state-owned enterprises. A centre-piece of the party congress was approval for a sell-off of state assets, or privatisation, but the authorities remain wary about adding to the pool of unemployed.

China's hard-pressed leaders had probably hoped they could pause for breath before the formation of the new government, but worrying developments at home and abroad hardly allow such luxury. These are delicate moments in China's long march to market.

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What more can we say? We think the HSBC Group's success in Euromoney's 1997 Awards for Excellence says it all: Best Foreign Bank in China, Best Foreign Bank in Malaysia, Best Foreign Bank in Singapore, Best Bank in Hong Kong, Best Securities Firm in Hong Kong, Best Bank in Asia and Best Bank in the world. Enough said.

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2 CHINA

THE ECONOMY • by Tony Walker

A new and testing phase

It would be a mistake for policymakers to ignore the warning signals

Chinese officials have said little about turbulence in Asian markets, and what they have said has tended to sound complacent.

The impact on China will be negligible, they say, because the currency is not fully convertible and therefore protected from speculative pressures, foreign debt is manageable, the current account is healthy, exports are up and foreign exchange reserves are strong.

All this is true, but China's economy, irrespective of regional problems, is entering a new and testing phase with growth slowing and unemployment rising. Asia's turmoil provides a worrying backdrop to China's attempts to maintain growth and accelerate reform of its indebted state sector.

Added to these concerns are signs of deflation in an economy burdened by overcapacity in some sectors, such as consumer durables. Retail prices rose by just 0.4 per cent in October compared with the same month last year.

Gross domestic product growth for the third quarter

of 8 per cent, compared with 9.5 per cent for the first half, reveals a marked slowing of activity. Officials say this is in line with growth targets for the year, but they cannot be sanguine about such a slowdown.

In any case, China's GDP may be overstated by between 1 and 2 percentage points because of inefficiencies in the system, including a continued build-up of inventories. Western economists say that should growth slow to around 6 per cent (compared with an average of about 10 per cent since 1979) this would represent a "danger zone" because of implications for job creation.

A "social compact" between an authoritarian government and a relatively quiescent populace, many of whom have been affected by painful reforms of the state sector, requires continuing high rates of growth to provide economic opportunities for the jobs.

A key to continued growth of around 8 to 9 per cent are high savings rates of 40 per cent of earnings. These are among the highest savings ratios in the world and have helped to underpin China's supercharged economy, but such levels might be difficult to sustain if the economy slows further and unemployment rises faster.

Mao Yuzhi of Unirule, a privately-funded think-tank, says that a 40 per cent savings rate translates into 10 per cent growth, but he believes that such high savings levels will fall back, and it is inevitable that growth will slow over the next few years.

On the other hand, he does not believe China is heading for a recession, and is dubious about calls for selective economic stimulus. "China does not have a problem of insufficient demand. China is not in a period of recession," Mr Mao says. "The problem is that supply cannot meet demand very often because of rigidities in the system."

Other Chinese economists would dispute Mr Mao's conclusions, pointing to a continuing build-up of unsold goods as evidence of a flat economy.

Fan Gang, director of the National Economic Research Institute, an economic consultancy, has for the past year been calling on the government to stimulate activity to limit the possibility of a damaging slowdown.

He advocates accelerated approvals for new projects, many of which involve foreign investment, and increases in infrastructure spending.

"I am not arguing for a large stimulus. We shouldn't overreact," Mr Fan says. "But I am worried the government will be slow to react and in the end take measures which are too little and too late."

Asia's turbulence, he said, would inevitably make investors and bankers more cautious in their dealings with China and thus there was "all the more reason" the government should seek to offset the impact of slowdown. "These are all factors working in the direction of contraction," he said.

Other signs of sluggishness include a continuing slow down in the growth of bank lending. Outstanding loans for the first nine months increased by about the same amount as the corresponding period last year.

Financial institutions, under stricter central bank control, are becoming more selective about projects they are willing to support and are falling well short of fulfilling government credit quotas. This contrasts with earlier years of the economic boom when credit ceilings were widely ignored.

Growth of investment in fixed assets continues to slow, another sign of reduced activity. In the first three quarters, investment grew by 10 per cent, 26 percentage points lower than the first half of 1997.

At the same time, inventories continued to grow significantly faster than industrial output. In August, they

were up 13.7 per cent in real terms, faster than both output and fixed investment.

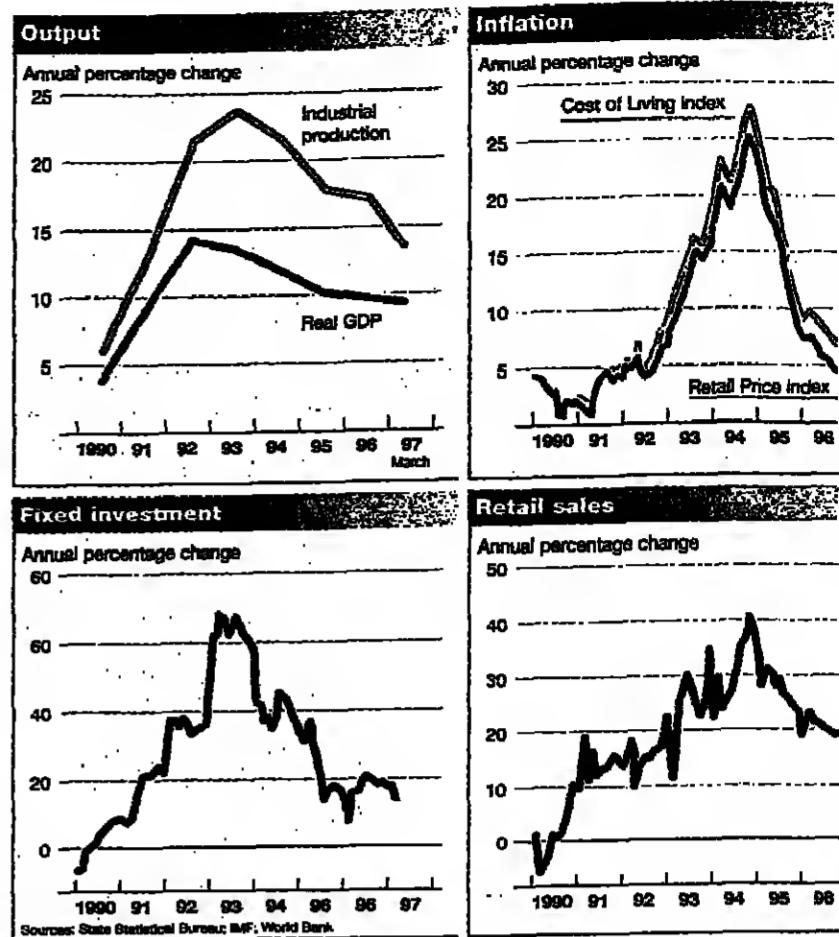
Efforts to reduce stockpiles of unsold goods are likely to be complicated by greater competition in overseas markets following devaluation of south-east Asian currencies.

China's export boom - a trade surplus is predicted this year of about \$35bn - seems certain to tail off over the next year. Slowing export growth would feed anxieties in the region about a competitive devaluation of the yuan.

Perhaps the most worrying sign of reduced activity comes from the non-state sector where, for the first time in a decade, investment growth, at 8.4 per cent in the eight months to August, fell below that of investment in industry generally.

This indicates that urban collectives and township and village enterprises, accounting for 40 per cent of the gross value of industrial output, are sliding towards recession. A host of feeding problems from lack of access to credit to poor product mix and uncertainty over ownership are hitting what had been the economy's most dynamic sector hard.

The state sector itself is scarcely faring much better. About half China's state-enterprises were lossmaking in the first nine months, about



Sources: State Statistical Bureau; IMF; World Bank

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the same as last year. Total losses amounted to \$130bn in August. Unutilised foreign investment was up 16 per cent year-on-year in the eight months to August, but new commitments dropped 41 per cent.

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Asian exports
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For Asian economies to reach higher plateaus, fundamental industries and services must first be in place. It's a crucial step requiring access to world capital markets. This year for China, Merrill Lynch has helped generate over US\$2 billion through issues of debt and equity. For mining and vehicle manufacturing industries which fuel domestic productivity. For shipping and transportation links that move people, materials and goods. And tourism which generates foreign exchange. All vital industries on which the country will grow. Helping build solid foundations for the future. For our clients, and for the people of China, we think it makes a difference.

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4 CHINA

FOREIGN POLICY • by Tony Walker

Beijing takes expansive role

An increasing confidence on the world stage is being displayed by Beijing

All roads in late 1997, it seemed, led to and from Beijing. No sooner had President Jiang Zemin returned from his summit in Washington than he was welcoming Russia's President Boris Yeltsin in the Chinese capital.

Simultaneously, Premier Li Peng embarked on a timely visit to Japan to discuss, among other things, Asia's financial turmoil. Hard on the heels of that meeting Mr Jiang was in Vancouver for the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation forum.

And in the next week or so China's president will be in

Kuala Lumpur for an historic meeting of the nine-nation Association of South-East Asian Nations grouping and leaders of the region's three leading economic powers Japan, South Korea and China.

In the meantime, Beijing helped broker the meeting in Geneva aimed at putting an end to the state of war on the Korean peninsula. That gathering involved North and South Korea, China and Russia.

Not since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 and the emergence of the non-aligned movement in the 1950s has Beijing been quite so engaged on an international stage. But the focus now could hardly be more different.

A bipolar world dominated by Cold War protagonists has given way to an evolving multipolar system in which

the US is a dominant force, but other states and regions are on the rise, notably China.

Chinese officials speak increasingly of "multipolarity" which has become an avowed aim of China's foreign policy, partly as a reaction to US dominance.

But emphasis on a multipolar system in which China is a key participant is also recognition of Beijing's growing responsibilities and weight internationally.

As Chen Jian, an assistant foreign minister, said in an interview: "Since the Cold War is over, we stand for a new type of state-to-state relationship characterised by mutual respect and mutual co-operation as the world moves towards multipolarity."

The year 1997 may come to be regarded as a watershed in Chinese foreign policy, a year during which a re-invigorated China began to display increased self-confidence on a world stage commensurate with its strategic and economic significance.

Circumstances have played their part. Asia's financial crisis has obliged Beijing to assume greater

regional responsibilities,

tive

assault. Beijing has,

generally speaking, appeared

to live up to undertakings

not to interfere in the

day-to-day running of Hong

Kong. But these are early days.

Beijing may still have misgivings about engagement with the region on a multitude of fronts - engagement brings responsibility but recognises it has no choice. China's spreading economic interests dictate that it contributes to preserving regional financial stability.

While President Jiang's

summit with Bill Clinton in Washington in late October, caught most attention among recent "foreign policy events", there have been others. The Hong Kong handover in mid-year was a momentous occasion whose aftermath appears so far to have been handled competently by Beijing.

Recent pressures on the

Hong Kong dollar proved an

early test of the "one country, two systems" formula under which China assumed control on July 1. China's central bank was supportive, but made clear that the Hong Kong Monetary Authority was responsible for defending the Hong Kong dollar "peg" against specula-

tive

attack.

While these issues remain contentious, they appear to have been subsumed by a genuine desire by Beijing to achieve more stable and predictable relationships with other world powers and the US in particular.

Mr Jiang's visit to Wash-

ington accompanied by his

statement en route that he

saw his mission as achieving

a new framework for better

understanding.

The presidents said they

were committed to building

a "constructive" strategic

partnership; it is a measure

of changes taking place in

the world that such an aim

can be buffeted by

disagreements over trade,

human rights and prolifera-

tion.



Here's to a successful summit. President Jiang Zemin at the White House with President Bill Clinton



*A farm would never become a reality
for this family without the irrigation system;*

*the irrigation system would never become a reality
without electricity;*

*electricity might never become a reality
if not for the engineers of ABB.*

JES 101520

POLITICS • by Tony Walker

Competent start for Jiang

The president has yet to convince sceptics he can push through further reforms

It has been a satisfactory year for Jiang Zemin, China's president. The death in February of Deng Xiaoping, China's patriarch, allowed Mr Jiang to emerge at last from the shadow of his mentor.

It had been a long apprenticeship. In the end Deng's lingering departure weighed heavily, not just on Mr Jiang's own aspirations to be regarded as leader in his own right, but also on decision-making.

The death of Deng, long anticipated, was in a sense well-timed for Mr Jiang, occurring as it did at the beginning of a critical year in Chinese politics.

Indeed, it was almost as if Deng's departure for his "meeting with Karl Marx" was choreographed, coming after the Spring Festival holiday, but well before testing events such as the Hong Kong handover and the 15th Communist party congress.

Photo: AP

This allowed his successors to deal efficiently with his funeral without distraction. More importantly, it provided Mr Jiang with time to assert control.

Following a pattern apparent since his surprise elevation to leadership of the Communist Party in 1989, in the midst of student demonstrations, Mr Jiang has done better than expected.

He has, it seems, been much under-estimated, although reservations persist about his ability to deal with a crisis.

That may come soon enough if China's economy continues to slow and Asian economic turbulence erodes Chinese exports and inflows of capital. Slowing growth, business failures and rising unemployment constitute one of China's nightmare scenarios.

But for the moment China's leader can be well satisfied with developments. In a year when much might have gone awry, things have probably turned out better than anticipated.

He has been lucky, although as a western official responsible for monitoring China's internal affairs

says "To some extent you make your own luck - and he has certainly exploited opportunities presented to him."

Starting with Deng's funeral, Mr Jiang seized the initiative, making the running in a crucial internal party debate about economic reform. He has also appeared more self-confident on an international stage.

His speech at the central party school on May 26, outlining new ideas for the economy, was in some ways the keynote address of the year, rivalling in importance his report on September 12 to the party congress itself.

The party school speech, which dealt with the controversial issue of privatising state-owned enterprises, became a blueprint for policies enacted later in the year.

Mr Jiang used the occasion effectively to pre-empt demands opposed to a sell-off of state assets.

The leadership line-up to emerge from the party congress is, generally-speaking, pro-Jiang, but is also broadly representative of factions within the party.

Much has been made of the retirement of Qiao Shi, formerly number three in

the hierarchy and a presumed rival of Mr Jiang's, but in a sign that Mr Qiao's influence persists, the new seven-member standing committee of the politburo includes a Qiao-protégé.

The standing committee is composed of tough, experienced cadres who may show deference to Mr Jiang, but he is powerful in his own right, in rank order the standing committee is: Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, Zhu Rongji, Li Ruihuan, Hu Jintao, Wei Jiaxun and Li Lanqing.

What distinguishes the seven men (there are no women in the highest echelons of the leadership) is that they share a broad commitment to economic reform.

PRIVATISATION • by James Harding

Uncertainty clouds path to sell-offs

Beijing needs to sell state assets but it does not want to rush the process

There is a joke, apparently of Polish origin, doing the rounds in China: What is the definition of state enterprise reform? The sale of enterprises of unknown value, which nobody owns, to people with no money.

Since President Jiang Zemin told a congress of the ruling Communist party in September that the government would seek greater diversity of ownership to improve the efficiency of state enterprises, the questions thrown up by that quip have needed all the more urgent answers.

The sale of state companies is set to proceed with greater vigour, but uncertainties cloud the process: Who owns the enterprises? How do you value them? And who will be allowed to buy them?

At the Party congress, Mr Jiang said China should "quicken the pace" of state enterprise reform, including "re-organisation, merger, leasing contract operation, joint stock partnership or sell-off". The landmark address gave the green light to widespread capital restructuring in China's state sector by reinterpreting the Marxist tenet of ownership of state assets by the proletariat to allow for greater "public ownership".

But Chinese officials have emphasised that Mr Jiang has not sanctioned mass privatisation.

"We will probe the best way to improve public ownership, but privatisation is out of the question," Zhang Zhigang, vice-minister of the state economic and trade commission, said shortly after the congress.

Beijing has acknowledged that the debts and inefficiencies of the country's 370,000 state enterprises are too great a burden for the state to bear, but it does not want to rush the sale for fear of being accused of a disorderly and undervalued divestiture of state assets.

Nor could it feasibly transfer the bulk of state companies into the hands of the Chinese public in a hurry because of the structural issues which need to be resolved.

Over the years, the ownership of state enterprises has become an increasingly complicated issue, as cross-shareholdings have blurred the lines of ownership and control.

Rivalries between municipal, provincial and national entities - which pay tax at different levels to different government authorities - have knotted the structure of authority and responsibility. And the thorny question of property rights has yet to be clarified.

The effective power of shareholders to govern the enterprises which they own - or will own - is also unclear in a country which has recognised the legal rights of shareholders but where the Communist party has the ultimate authority. The new economic structure threatens to sit uncomfortably with the existing political system.

Given the uncertainties surrounding ownership, the valuation of state enterprises is a murky business, made more difficult by the inadequacy of the domestic



Testing time: the 15th Communist party congress

Photo: AP

When electric current begins flowing into the coastal region of northern Peru, some of the local people may think it's nothing short of a miracle. Perhaps they won't be far wrong.

The Peruvian Energy Commission had been trying to bring power to this remote region for a long time. And they knew all too well the myriad problems inherent in a project of this magnitude.

Fortunately, the local firm heading the project, 'Aguaytia Energia del Peru SRL', found a company that could help provide an ingenious solution to this energy challenge: ABB.

It's a solution that will utilize natural gas located east of the Andes.

The gas will be pumped from the fields, processed, then piped to a 155 megawatt power plant.

Electricity from the plant will then be sent via a 400 kilometre power transmission line across the Andes to the coast, thereby supplying the area with the much-needed energy from Peruvian resources.

It's the kind of solution only a team of dedicated individuals with multi-cultural perspectives, multi-disciplinary expertise and global and local orientation working together could create.

And, if for one particular group of Peruvian farmers, ABB's ingenious engineering qualifies as a miracle, that's OK with us.

INGENUITY AT WORK

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6 CHINA

BANKING • by Simon Davies

Hamstrung by their bad loans

Banks' problems must be resolved if economic reforms are to succeed

China may have avoided the worst of the recent Asian financial turmoil but it shares one significant similarity with the more troubled economies of the region – a crumbling banking system.

An estimated 25 per cent of the leading state banks' loans are non-performing, a product of an era when bank managers had little choice but to accept policy loans recommended by government officials.

The problem sparked a meeting of leading Chinese bankers in Beijing last month, attended by President Jiang Zemin, to review the options for restructuring the banking sector.

The problem needs to be resolved urgently. Mr Jiang has outlined ambitions plans for restructuring China's 370,000 State-owned Enterprises (SOEs). The banking system has to play a role in allocating capital for the restructuring and it will struggle to do so while it is hamstrung by bad loans to SOEs and archaic lending practices.

Peter Churchouse, managing director of Morgan Stanley in Hong Kong, says: "You can't expect the banks to operate as proper commercial banks until you remove their responsibility for keeping the State-owned Enterprises afloat."

The problem for the government is twofold. It needs to resolve an estimated Y110,000bn of bad loans within the state-owned banks, and it must overcome significant structural flaws within those banks, ranging from over-staffing to a lack of risk management systems.

Di Weiping, vice-presi-

dent of the Shanghai branch of the People's Bank of China, says: "A lot of the banks' problems are inherited from the old system of policy-oriented loans. If there are no financial reforms, then these problems will not be properly addressed." He was concerned that even if the problem loans were removed, the banks might merely put their revitalised balance sheets behind more bad lending.

"There is a lack of internal control systems because in the past they did not need them – they did whatever the government wanted."

The problems could be exacerbated by the economic slowdown, with the latest statistics pointing to deflation. Moreover, in big cities such as Shanghai there is a glut of new buildings coming on stream just as regional turmoil has driven down office prices.

Mr Di says the first step that needs to be taken is to build a genuine barrier between the state and its banks so that old-style policy lending can be ended.

At least there is a relatively dynamic group of new commercial banks, which are better managed, but these still account for only a small proportion of bank lending. Given the size and structure of some of the state banks, it has been suggested that they will be broken up into regional banks.

Considerable job cuts will also be required, before these banks can become truly competitive, and there needs to be substantial investment in technology and improvement of credit appraisal systems.

But to become competitive the state banks need to be relieved of much of their bad debt burden.

Boone Yik-luen, head of China research at ING Barings, argues that the bad loans will take a long time.

The frenzy of large projects has given way to more measured objectives

Alongside the traffic lights in downtown Guangzhou there are digital timers, counting the seconds until red turns to green. Amid the frantic traffic they provide a further reminder of the fast pace of life in the southern city and surrounding Guangdong province.

Since Deng Xiaoping, China's late paramount leader, launched his policies of economic reform and liberalisation, Guangdong has been on the fast track to development. It accounts for some 40 per cent of total Chinese exports, while investment from Hong Kong and further afield has helped fuel double digit growth and a sharp rise in prosperity.

Some banking analysts suggest there are also substantial foreign bank borrowings that need to be addressed otherwise Guangdong will remain at the vanguard of the national economy and whether its rise can be sustained.

The answers have implications beyond the borders of the southern province which has been given a licence to lend local currency and a 11 licences are being considered.

However, Mr Di admitted that "the current policy for the experiment is too restrictive", and the People's Bank has been encouraging the government to relax some of the restrictions. Until that happens, foreign banks will struggle to build a profitable business – but given the state of the domestic banking system, it could be a long wait.

But there are also substantial challenges to be faced.

Guangzhou
Total GDP (1996): Yn 144.58 billion
Real GDP growth: 13.1%
Per capita income in urban areas: Yn 9,370
Principal industries: Light industry, Hi-tech

Sources: China Statistical Yearbook; Shanghai Statistical Yearbook; Guangzhou Statistical Bureau; Chongqing Statistical Yearbook

Map: China

Photo: AP

Illustration: FT

Map: China

SHANGHAI • by James Harding

Forefront of reforms

The city has grand financial ambitions, but there are still hurdles to clear

Shanghai is commonly defined by past glories and future ambitions. Stand on the Bund, the hotchpotch of art deco and colonial architecture that graces the city waterfront, and the pre-war splendour comes alive.

Across the brown waters of the Huangpu river is Pudong, the former wasteland that has been turned into fields of skyscrapers and construction sites to make room for China's financial centre.

But Shanghai has some way to travel before it recaptures its faded opulence or fulfills its much-trumpeted promise.

Beijing has chosen to "market test" much of its economic liberalisation programme in Shanghai, "experimenting" with foreign competition in the financial services sector, aggressive reform of state enterprises and greater financial responsibility for its citizens.

This year, the first foreign banks in China were given the right to operate in local currency. The licences restrict them to business in Shanghai and require them to move their operations to Pudong, earmarked to become China's Wall Street.

Another 11 foreign banks are waiting for central bank approval to start Chinese currency lending in Shanghai. International insurers have also been allowed to enter the Chinese market through Shanghai.

Over the past year, a couple of new Sino-foreign joint ventures and a second wholly-owned subsidiary of a foreign insurance company have been approved, all to operate in Shanghai. The first Sino-foreign joint venture trading companies were

approved this year - also to operate from Shanghai.

The municipal government sees itself at the forefront of the state enterprise reform process. Officials at the Shanghai Economic Commission say the city has overseen the merger of 700 enterprises and let 58 companies go bankrupt since 1994. Another 50 bankruptcies are planned this year.

The government has also encouraged the city's inhabitants to take greater responsibility for their own affairs by extending private ownership - notably, allowing them to take out mortgages.

"Why does Shanghai matter?" asked Richard Graham, the former head of ING Barings in Shanghai earlier this year. "Because if it doesn't work here, with all the chances that Shanghai has been given, it isn't going to work."

The evidence so far suggests it is working - even if there have been glitches.

Shanghai's gross domestic product has grown at an average rate of 14.1 per cent since 1992, the year when Beijing belatedly endorsed a programme of rapid development for China's most precious city.

The city has attracted cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) of more than \$31.5bn in the past few years. FDI into Shanghai until last year grew more quickly than in any other part of the country. Average salaries have trebled since 1990.

Xu Kuangdi, Shanghai's mayor since 1995, expects the economy to grow by 13 per cent this year and is hoping to see the growth in gross domestic product tamed and brought down to 10 to 11 per cent by 2000. The major reason for the lowering of the GDP growth rate in Shanghai... is because we have controlled investment in real estate development," he says.

Shanghai's boom has been driven by investment, both

Shanghai

Total GDP (1996): Yn 220.22 billion
Real GDP growth: 13.4%
Per capita income in urban areas: Yn 6,782.12
Principal industries: steel making and pressing, motor vehicles, petrochemicals and fine chemicals
Source: China Statistical Yearbook; Shanghai Statistical Yearbook; Chongming Statistical Bureau

domestic and foreign. Lu Deming, an economist at Fudan University, estimates that about 70 per cent of output in recent years can be accounted for by investment and notes that investment growth has outstripped increases in real output levels.

This bias may expose Shanghai because foreign investment levels look set to decline. Municipal officials expect foreign direct investment in 1997 will be about \$6bn, down from \$11bn last year and \$10.5bn the previous year. The burst property bubble - vacancy rates in commercial buildings in Shanghai are estimated at over 50 per cent - has also served as a warning of over-investment.

Unemployment has become a big problem and that threatens to grow as Shanghai struggles with the redundancies created by the failure of state-owned industries.

The city needs to build a thriving services industry to absorb its growing surplus of workers. To do so, officials know it will have to create the "software" of a modern economy - the rule of law, an educated and skilled workforce, flexibility in the market and responsible regulation. The physical infrastructure will take less than a decade to build, but the legal and social foundations of a modern financial market may take longer, they say.

It is not easy to get a job here," says one Shenyang man, clutching a scrap of paper on which he has scribbled "chef". He is still on the books of a state-owned battery company, but it has run into difficulties and has stopped paying him.

Mu Suixin, mayor of Shenyang, acknowledges that the city, which was at the forefront of heavy industry in China in the years of the

SHENYANG • by James Harding

The burden of change

Grappling with the painful effects of the transition to a free market

On a freezing grey morning in Shenyang - much like any other winter morning in the largest city in China's troubled industrial north - about a thousand people gather in a small park in the hope of finding work.

Lu Xun park serves as an informal labour market for the growing ranks of jobless. It has long been a place for migrants seeking casual work, but now an increasing number of Shenyang locals laid off from state enterprises are to be found among the job-seekers.

"The city needs to build a thriving services industry to absorb its growing surplus of workers. To do so, officials know it will have to create the "software" of a modern economy - the rule of law, an educated and skilled workforce, flexibility in the market and responsible regulation. The physical infrastructure will take less than a decade to build, but the legal and social foundations of a modern financial market may take longer, they say.

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Mu Suixin, mayor of Shenyang, acknowledges that the city, which was at the forefront of heavy industry in China in the years of the

Shenyang

Total GDP (1996): Yn 77.2 billion
Real GDP growth: 11.1%
Per capita income in urban areas: Yn 4,000.17
Principal industries: metallurgy, building materials, motor vehicles, petrochemicals, aviation and aerospace
Source: China Statistical Yearbook; Shenyang Statistical Yearbook; Chongming Statistical Bureau

planned economy, has been burdened with a leading role in handling the painful consequence of transition to a free market mass redundancies.

"Shenyang is the place with the largest number of lay-offs in China. And it has the greatest difficulty re-employed people. This is a very serious problem," he says.

The mayor calculates that there are just over 1.3m people who work in Shenyang's state-owned industrial enterprises, of whom 380,000 are laid off and a further 200,000 face more or less imminent redundancy.

These large and medium-sized enterprises account for nearly two-thirds of Shenyang's 2.15m workforce, but less than half of the city's output. State industry sales

fell 30 per cent of Shenyang's total workforce and more than 45 per cent of the workers at state industries. Anecdotal evidence suggests the restructuring of the local economy is already creating a crime problem in the city. The fear of crime is increasing as reports of domestic violence, armed assaults and robbery increase. Like the rest of China, Shenyang has pride itself on the relative safety of its streets.

Although there have been sporadic reports of worker unrest in China, Mayor Mu is adamant that the growing number of redundancies will not threaten social stability. "Life here in Shenyang is stable. There has been nobody out on the streets demonstrating against the lay-offs."

Nevertheless, finding jobs for former state workers is the main challenge facing the Shenyang government. The most promising avenue of re-employment in the short-term is the expanding non-state sector. Shenyang's flashy new entrepreneurial class is arguably more con-

spicuous than the unemployed.

More than 500,000 people in Shenyang are self-employed or working for private companies. While output at large and medium-sized state industries rose only 2.4 per cent last year, the value of sales produced by collective enterprises together with 600 state businesses rose by 27.1 per cent.

Shenyang is also hoping foreign investment will help to take the strain of its economic changes. Since the start of China's economic liberalisation in the late 1970s, it has attracted \$3.3bn, but it is hoping that figure will increase rapidly in the next few years.

The restructuring of the city's economy, away from heavy industries and towards an expanded tertiary sector, is aimed at invigorating the job market.

As China rationalises the state sector, the municipal government figures indicate that redundancies may affect nearly 30 per cent of Shenyang's total workforce and more than 45 per cent of the workers at state industries.

Anecdotal evidence sug-

gests the restructuring of the local economy is already creating a crime problem in the city. The fear of crime is increasing as reports of domestic violence, armed assaults and robbery increase. Like the rest of China, Shenyang has pride itself on the relative safety of its streets.

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Jin Yongqai, director of the company, says the process has been accelerated by a recent merger which made the state a minority shareholder. "The change has improved the efficiency of the company."

The implication for the Lu Xun park labour market in Shenyang is that the crowd

is likely to get bigger before it gets smaller.

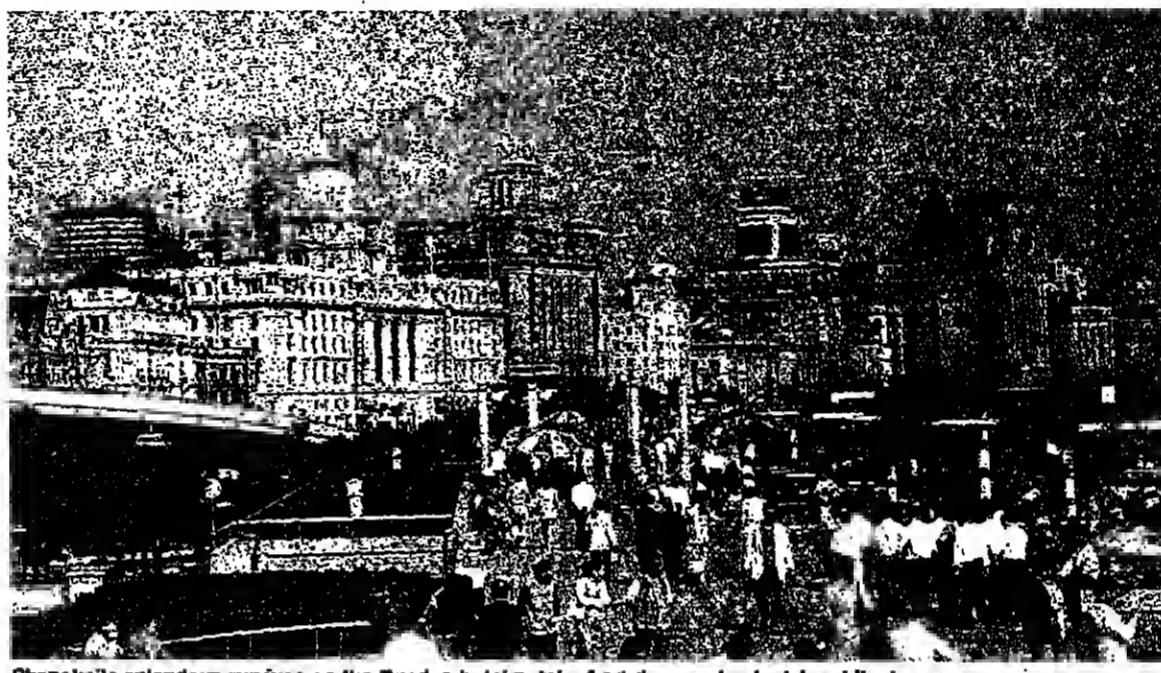


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8 CHINA

CAPITAL MARKETS • by Simon Davies

Vital role in restructuring

The government's reforms offer plenty of scope for expansion

The Shanghai stock exchange is set to move from its dingy quarters in a backpackers' hotel to a new steel and glass structure modelled loosely on Paris's Arc de Triomphe.

This month's move demonstrates the ambition of a city which wants to match Hong Kong's position as a financial centre and is rapidly building the basic infrastructure to do so. Indeed, the new exchange will boast Asia's largest trading floor, despite the fact that the fully computerised market requires no trading floor whatsoever.

The relocation also shows that China's fledgling stock markets can no longer be considered as merely the capitalist experiment that they were when launched in 1990. International attention has

focused on China's disappointing experiment with foreign-only B shares which have been sidelined by the success of Chinese companies listing in Hong Kong. But in 1996, turnover on China's stock markets was actually higher than in Hong Kong, thanks to domestic interest in A shares.

Turnover rose to \$295bn in the first nine months of 1997, with around two-thirds coming from small retail investors.

During the first half of 1997, the four biggest brokerages in China signed up 23,000 new accounts per day, as investors diverted cash from deposit accounts into the stock market.

But the government needs more. At the recent 15th Communist party congress, it announced plans to restructure its state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The parous state of the banking system, with its substantial bad debts, has put considerable pressure on the capital markets to play a key role in funding the restructuring.

There are around 370,000 SOEs. Even if only 1 per cent

of them required a significant injection of capital via the stock market, it would take a listing a day over a 10-year period to sell them off.

Peter Churchouse, managing director of Morgan Stanley Asia, says: "In five to seven years, China could easily have the biggest stock market in Asia, excluding Japan."

This would represent a challenge to the world's largest and longest established stock markets. But for China, which lacks the regulatory framework, market size and institutional investor base of New York or London, it would require a quantum leap.

Nonetheless, savings rates are high. The banking system is sitting on vast underused deposits and there are substantial hidden savings within the economy. As interest rates come down further, capital will be looking for higher returns elsewhere, which will help the government allocate capital resources more efficiently.

Mr Francis Leung, managing director of the Hong Kong-based investment bank Peregrine, argues: "Companies are trading on ridiculous multiples because of an imbalance between supply and demand," and the government is increasing its quota of new issues.

It is no coincidence that shortly after the government announced its plans for SOE reforms, it also approved legislation to introduce mutual funds.

These are likely to start off as purely domestic institutions tapping domestic savings, but foreign fund management groups are hoping to be able to break into the market through joint ventures with local securities houses. This would help absorb an increase in supply of new shares, and help create a less volatile stock market – volatility is something the government is anxious to avoid.

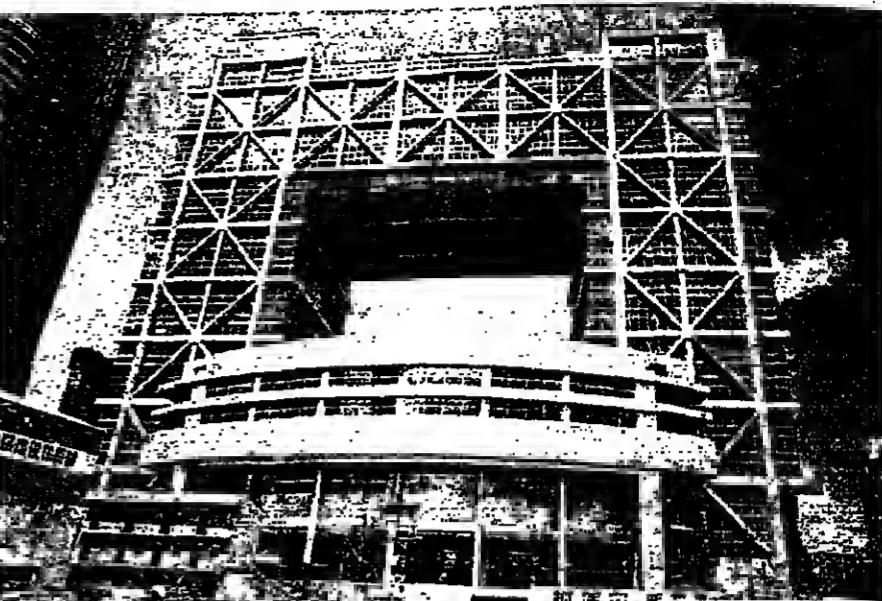
There is another significant advantage to the state of expanding the stock market. Mr Tu Guangshuo, the new president of the Shanghai stock exchange, says:

"Through the issue of shares, company can be switched from state ownership to joint stock ownership, which will help overcome the shortcomings of the original management system."

Given the potential barriers to mergers and cost-cutting, industry consolidation would also be more easily pursued by listed companies. But Mr Tu admits that progress may be more cautious because of the recent turmoil in the Asian region.

One casualty of this could be the long-awaited merger of the A and B share markets to create a substantial stock market open to foreign investors. This is unlikely to happen until the yuan becomes fully convertible, and the currency crisis in the region may have put that back several years.

The development of a broader capital market for raising long-term debt also looks distant. In theory, bonds would be the obvious method of funding state enterprise reform without



Ready for business: Shanghai's new stock exchange opens this month

Photo: Reuters

the state having to relinquish control.

But government officials are concerned that state enterprises might invest the proceeds of any bond issues unwisely, and the government would have to foot the bill for defaults.

In addition, the government has been keen to concentrate demand for bonds on its own sovereign issues – although outstanding trea-

sary bonds amounted to just Yu300bn last year, or less than 5 per cent of the money supply.

The existing banks will also be keen to slow down the process of disintermediation – the replacement of financial intermediary lending functions by the direct issue of securities by businesses to investors.

Joe Zhang, senior economist at Credit Lyonnais, said: "When the capital markets get to a certain size, the banks will scream. Good companies will not need banks, and banks do not like bad companies. The banks will try to frustrate the listing process by lobbying government to put up barriers."

Nonetheless, the cost of China's economic restructuring will be such that the capital markets look set for a period of substantial growth.

HONG KONG AS A CAPITAL RAISING CENTRE • by John Riddings

Tightened tap stems flow of issues

Among the many received wisdoms thrown into question by Asia's financial crisis is Hong Kong's role as a financial dynamo for the mainland.

After the territory's stock market collapse, which saw the benchmark Hang Seng index lose more than 40 per cent of its value, several mainland-backed companies postponed plans to raise funds in Hong Kong, breaking an established pattern of corporate funding.

Last week, CNAC, the commercial arm of China's aviation regulator, said it would go ahead with its listing plans, having earlier announced a delay. The news raised hopes of a resumption of "red chip" activity, although the

planned proceeds of HK\$630m mark a sharp fall from original estimates.

These issues matter far beyond the companies involved. International capital is needed to fund the modernisation and reform of mainland enterprises, the economic priority of China's new leadership. For Hong Kong, its post-colonial prospects hinge partly on its ability to defend its role as the international financial centre for the mainland.

Despite the hiatus, most serious commentators see little cause for concern.

One senior Hong Kong official arguing that the crisis, and resulting caution in Beijing over financial market liberalisation, is likely to strengthen Hong Kong's

role as an offshore financial centre for China. "They can derive the benefits while limiting the risks," he says.

Claims of a resumption of issues are supported by several considerations. Most immediately, Hong Kong has already established itself as the main international financial centre for China, and momentum is considerable.

In recent years the number and size of companies heading across the border to raise funds has grown by leaps and bounds. Proceeds from initial public offerings of red chips, the Hong Kong arms of mainland conglomerates or government agencies, and H-shares, the Hong Kong listings of state-owned enterprises, raised more than US\$8bn during the

first 10 months of the year, compared with a relatively meagre US\$1.3bn for all of 1996.

Demand for further funds remains great. President Jiang Zemin's keynote address to the 15th party congress in September underlined the importance of new leadership attaches to enterprise reform and signalled a green light for moves towards privatisation.

Tentative signs of a return to the Hong Kong market have already emerged. Apart from CNAC, Tianjin Development, the business arm of the eastern city's government, is pressing ahead with a roadshow.

Beijing Enterprises, the commercial arm of the capital's municipal government,

says it is discussing asset injections from its mainland parent, while investment bankers talk of reviving H-share listings previously put on hold.

Timing of issues will continue to depend on market conditions, but many are in the pipeline. Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank, says it has identified at least 10 H-share candidates which could raise more than US\$25bn over the coming months.

But while the listings may resume, the recent respite is likely to have lasting effects. "Red chip fever is a thing of the past," says the head of corporate finance at one US investment bank, referring to the speculative surge which pushed shares to unsustainable

heights in the months surrounding the handover. "For the first time, fundamentals are going to be scrutinised."

A more sedate strategy is also likely to be fostered by the authorities. The rush by mainland companies to Hong Kong's capital markets, and the even greater rush by Hong Kong investors to snap up any China-backed issue, caused concern on both sides of the border.

Ahead of July's transfer of sovereignty, the CSERC, China's markets regulator, introduced tighter regulations on asset injections.

The move was prompted by political sensitivity of state asset sales and fears of "not money" flowing south across the border.

Market regulators in Hong Kong expressed similar misgivings. "We have a new segment in our market

which exhibits some of the characteristics of a fledgling emerging market," says Edgar Cheng, chairman of the stock exchange. Among the more troublesome, he cited a high propensity for volatility, reduced transparency, and speculative retail participation. "We were at the stage where anything backed by China would trigger a stampede of investors," said one analyst. "I could have floated a Shangha taxi."

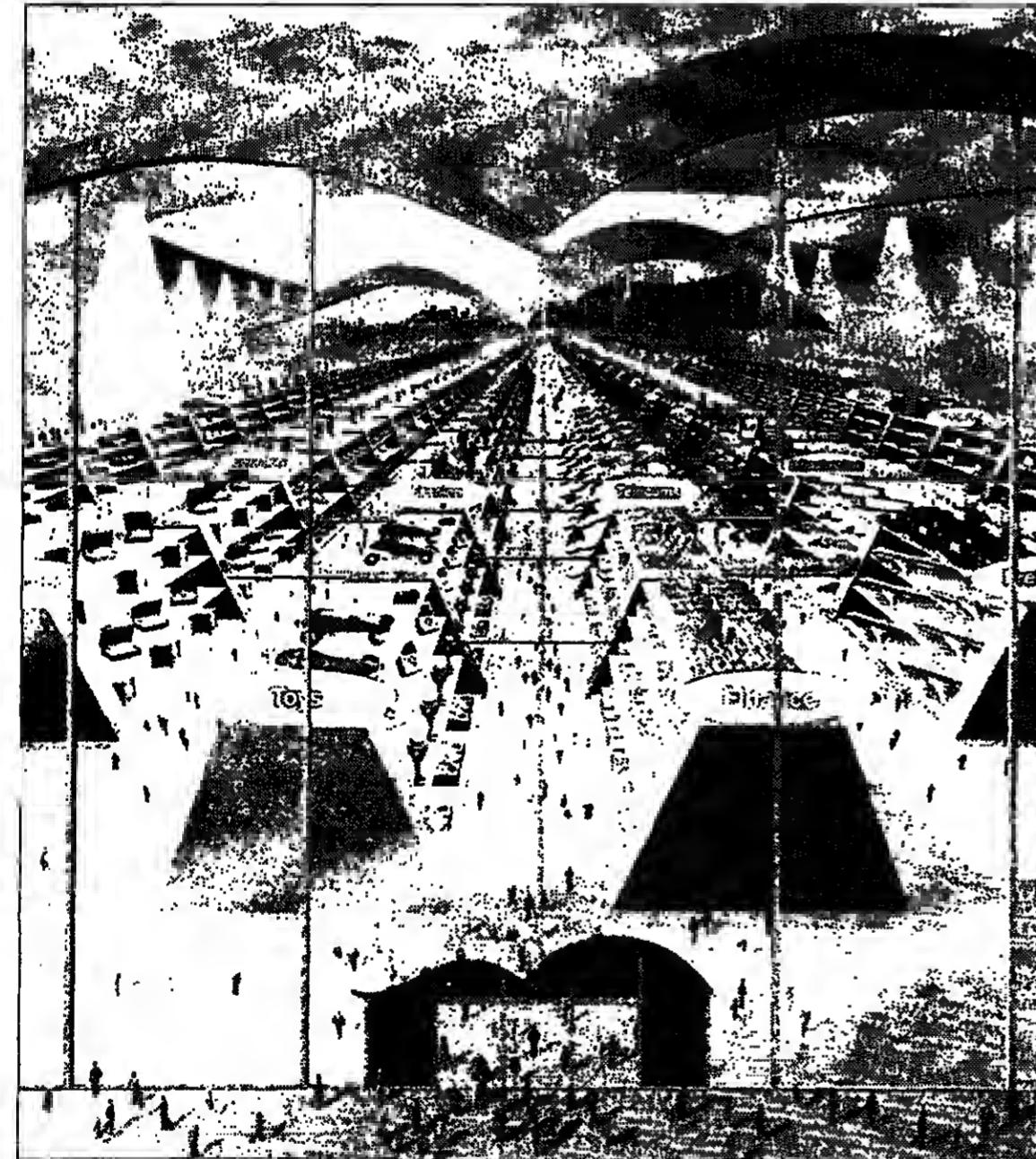
Investors are now likely to be much more discriminating. As a result support for issues will depend on the quality of existing businesses, rather than vague promises of future asset injections, and demand will tend towards established enterprises.

One example is China Telecom, the country's largest overseas issuer and the sole channel for international investment in the Chinese telecoms sector. Floated on perhaps the darkest day of Hong Kong's market falls, the US\$8bn initial public offering fell by 10 per cent on its debut. But within a few days, the company had regained its poise and now trades at a healthy premium to the HK\$11.68 issue price.

Others may find the going harder. "Let's just say that a lot of companies listed at the moment would not get off the ground if their IPO were today," says one corporate finance executive.

The question becomes one of the mainland's willingness to sell on more difficult terms. Such is the pressure for industrial restructuring, however, that momentum should be regarded. As one investment banker puts it:

"The listings are sure to keep flowing, even if the tap has been tightened."



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Commitment to China



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FPG Holdings Ltd. HK\$175,000,000 June 1997	GD Guangdong Investment Ltd. US\$150,000,000 June 1997	GD Guangdong Tannery Ltd. HK\$155,000,000 June 1997	Min Xin Holdings Ltd. HK\$342,640,000 1st 1997	Shenzen Bangda Co. Ltd. HK\$255,000,000 April 1997
Sino Land Co. Ltd. US\$245,000,000 1st 1997	Prudential Finance (C.B. 2002) Ltd. US\$210,000,000 May 1997	China Merchants Kai Hong Holdings Co. Ltd. HK\$257,459,200 1st 1997	China Travel International Investment Hong Kong Ltd. HK\$512,000,000 1st 1997	Ryden Development Ltd. HK\$378,000,000 Under 1997

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Monday December 8 1997

FINANCIAL TIMES SURVEY

WORLD PULP AND PAPER

A different approach will transform one of the most fragmented of industries, says Maggie Urry

A mantra for future success

Consolidation. Globalisation. Specialisation. These buzz words provide a new mantra for the pulp and paper industry as it tries to reduce the volatility of its business cycle.

For decades the industry has struggled with its boom and bust character. Those in the industry feel as queasy as fairground customers while watching profits rise and fall like a turbulent roller-coaster.

Investors feel unsettled by the uncertainty of the returns. As a result, the industry has been given a lowly rating by stock markets.

There are obvious reasons for its cyclical nature. The industry is highly fragmented. It operates capital-intensive, continuous-process plants. And many of its products are commodities that are traded around the world, largely on price. It is because of these inherent problems that the industry is adopting this new mantra.

According to Thomas Brodin, European paper analyst at Salomon Smith Barney: "The paper industry remains one of the most fragmented industries in the world." He estimates that in Europe, the 10 largest producers have barely 50 per cent of the market. This is the second most concentrated region in the world, after Japan.

But the position in Europe has improved dramatically, he says. In 1980, the top 10 producers owned 20 per cent of installed capacity.

By consolidating and thereby gaining larger market shares, companies believe they can begin to control rather than be at the

mercy of their markets. Capital investments can be planned more sensibly, so as not to disrupt the markets.

All too often in the past, an upswing in the market has perversely driven companies to add new capacity at the same time. The long lead time involved in building a paper machine or pulp mill usually means they come on-stream just when the upswing is ending, the extra capacity being the final straw that pushes prices sharply down.

Rumours in the market suggest that the long, on-going relationship between Repola and Kymmenen, which resulted in the birth of UPM-Kymmene, took place at the point it did in 1988 after Repola announced a plan to build a new light-weight coated paper machine just as Kymmenen was considering the same option.

According to some, the prospect of both projects proceeding could have destroyed the market and this pushed the two companies to the negotiating table.

Globalisation follows from consolidation, as well as from the tradeable commodity aspect of the industry's products. According to Eugen van As, executive chairman of Sappi, the South African-based group, there are many advantages to being global.

Sappi has acquired businesses in North America and Europe, and now has sizeable market shares for its coated wood-free paper in those markets as well as its home market. One benefit has been that it can transfer technology developed in one market to another.



For many decades, the pulp and paper industry has been fragmented, struggling with its boom and bust character. These days consolidation, globalisation and specialisation provide a new mantra for participants in the sector as they attempt to reduce the volatility of the industry's cycles and look to the future.



pulp worldwide capacity. Mr van As says: "We're not going to let 7 per cent wreck 93 per cent." With larger market shares, companies can exert greater discipline when timing new capacity.

Consolidation and globalisation are being achieved through a wave of mergers and acquisitions that has swept through the industry.

Mr Brodin lists a series of landmark deals. In North America, for instance, there have been mergers in the tissue sector of Kimberly-Clark and Scott Paper in 1995, and between James River and Fort Howard forming Fort James in May this year. And in newsprint, Ahlbi-Price and Stone Consolidated, agreed to merge in February.

In Europe, important deals

include the merger in Finland between Repola and Kymmenen and that between Enso-Gutzeit and Veitsiluoto in May 1996. SCA, the Swedish group, this summer moved to acquire the outstanding shares in PWA of Germany, left after its initial purchase of a majority stake in 1995. Like the big North American deals, this has brought consolidation in the tissue sector. The third Finnish paper group, Metso-Seria has struck several deals, including a tie up with Myllykoski.

And three other deals announced in the last few months are considered "very significant" by Mr Brodin. They are UPM-Kymmene's alliance with April, the Asian group, and its pur-

chase of the Blandin mill in the US, and Sappi's acquisition of KNP-Leykam mentioned earlier.

The notable element to these three deals are that they are across continents. After consolidation in domestic markets - including the dramatic reduction in the number of paper groups in Finland - moves in Europe or North America have meant "globalisation is suddenly kicking in," says Mr Brodin.

He says the deals in the tissue sector "changed the landscape". In Europe, the top four tissue groups now have 54 per cent of the capacity and in the US the top four control 79 per cent.

But there is still a long way to go. Ahlbi-Consolidation may be the largest newsprint producer in the world, but it has only 10 per cent of the global market.

Trade flows around the world are changing as the southern hemisphere producers grow in size. The example of Asia is significant. In the past, Asia was an export market for many northern hemisphere producers, but now the region is becoming an exporter itself, particularly of pulp and fine paper.

The hope is that such moves will mean a less volatile cycle in profits, and higher returns. The ultimate goal, says Mr van As, "is to create some shareholder value, something which we have been singularly unsuccessful at in the past".

t to China

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2 WORLD PULP AND PAPER

PRICE TRENDS • by Deborah Hargreaves

A bad time to swamp the market

The financial crises in east Asia have exacerbated already apparent problems

Executives in the pulp and paper industry had just begun to look for an improvement in prices in October following widespread consolidation in the industry, when the financial turmoil in Asia forced them to throw out most of their previous assumptions.

Currency devaluations and tumbling stock markets in countries such as Indonesia and Korea are putting pressure on the pulp price, which now looks more likely to go down rather than up in the coming weeks.

The past two years have seen pulp prices stuck at a low level following a collapse in the market in 1995. The weak market forced companies to consolidate with a handful of large, global deals announced this autumn.

Optimistic industry executives predicted that, at last, they would be able to push through price rises for pulp and see them accepted.

The financial crisis in Asia has, however, led to demand from the region drying up in recent weeks. Asian mills are also under increasing pressure to maximise their cashflow, which could mean producing rising tonnages for the world market.

"There is a good chance prices will decline now as we are seeing spot prices trad-

ing below list prices," says Dennis Christie, pulp and paper analyst at James Capel, the London brokers. Most companies are quoting \$880 a tonne for northern bleached softwood kraft pulp – the industry benchmark – but pulp is changing hands at \$850 a tonne on the spot market. Prices have slipped as low as \$840 a tonne for spot sales in Asia.

Asian mills have only recently become important to the pulp and paper market – until recently the region was a net buyer of pulp. But now Asia provides 5 to 10 per cent of global market pulp which, despite being lower in quality than the European and North American material, is still an important factor in determining prices.

European and North American mills have tried to counter the new competition from Asia by merging in mature markets and becoming global competitors by moving into new regions. Five mergers were announced in September and October this year, including the purchase of UPM-Kymmene, Europe's biggest pulp and paper producer of Blanck Paper, one of North America's largest producers of magazine-grade paper.

But the market remains plagued by overcapacity. Mr Christie estimates that there is still 12 to 13 per cent overcapacity that will continue to cast a shadow over pulp and paper prices.

Pulp prices currently comprise some 85 per cent of the costs of producing uncoated. Forward planning has never been the forestry industry's strongest characteristic. For years, companies have displayed a haphazard approach to investment in this most cyclical of sectors.

Typically, the pattern goes something like this. When prices rise, producers seek to take advantage by boosting capacity. New plants take a couple of years to build; by the time they come on stream, prices are often past their peak. The extra capacity floods an already-softening market with excess stocks, turning a slow down in prices into a steep descent.

The inability of paper companies to co-ordinate new factory starts has pushed pulp and paper prices up and down. The price of long fibre pulp – the key raw material

makes it difficult for paper producers without an in-house pulp supply to be profitable. Integrated producers can lose money on their pulp while making a profit on paper and vice versa, but many companies are not integrated in this way.

Paper producers have not had much more success than pulp suppliers in pushing through price rises in the past couple of years, although there have been stronger prices in some grades. Salomon Brothers, the US broker, has forecast actual price drops for three paper grades this year with fine paper grades showing modest increases.

Paper producers are looking for a drop of some \$50 a tonne in pulp prices to ease their cost pressures –

PULP FUTURES • by Greg McIvor

Smoothing out the peaks and troughs

Two schemes aim to hedge risk and moderate ups and downs in profitability

Forward planning has never been the trigger behind the launch this year of two schemes for trading forward contracts.

The schemes, in Helsinki and London, see pulp futures as a way of helping producers, traders and buyers to hedge their financial risk and smooth out the ongoing peaks and troughs in profitability.

The Finnish Options Exchange offers forward contracts based on cash settlement. Prices are calculated using an index compiled weekly from information supplied by more than 30 companies.

At the UK Pulpex bourse operated by OM, the Swedish derivatives exchange operator – via its London Securities and Derivatives

manufacturers of most grades find it hard to make a profit unless pulp costs are below 75 per cent of their overall costs.

The pressure on the pulp price is exacerbated by the fact that pulp stocks are at their highest point for three years. This makes paper producers better able to resist any price rises posted by the pulp mills. If companies start de-stocking this will add to the weakness in the market.

The pulp market is extremely fragmented and attempts by some producers to shut down mills on a temporary basis in order to boost prices have met with mixed success. The new mills in Asia are also far less disciplined about their approach to the pulp market and are unlikely to cut production when responding to

weakening prices.

The latest weakness in pulp and paper prices shows how much the industry is trapped in a vicious business cycle which is extremely hard to break.

Hakan Ostling, pulp and paper analyst at Goldman Sachs in London, says the industry is slowly learning the lessons of the past and trying to break out of the price cycle. "Consolidation in the sector is extremely important and the only way for the industry to improve profitability over the cycle. But it is likely to be a very slow, evolutionary change, rather than a quick fix."

While mergers and consolidation in the industry are unlikely to improve pulp and paper prices over the short term, they should have the longer term benefit of making

the leading market leaders much more powerful. If the leading companies in the industry gain more market share, they should be more willing to absorb closures that will bring in the longer term.

The creation of a few powerful global participants would also give the companies more market clout in dealing with their buyers, making it easier for them to push through price increases. But Mr Ostling points out that for some grades of paper, the industry is so fragmented that only massive consolidation would produce these benefits.

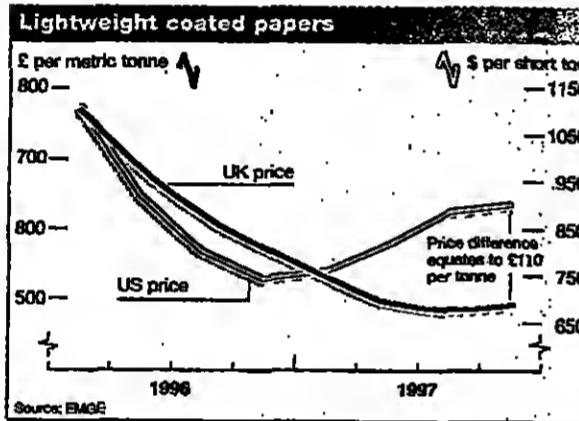
"Harsh reality suggests that there is no quick or easy solution to the industry's structural problem. Consolidation is altogether sound and should continue,

but it will be an evolutionary process that won't necessarily improve stability in the foreseeable future," he says.

In the meantime, the outlook for prices during the rest of this year and early next is not rosy. A strike since September at the Canadian operations of the New Zealand producer, Fletcher Challenge, has kept some pulp capacity off the market, but looks likely to soon be resolved. The restart of pro-

duction in British Columbia will depress prices further. At the same time, companies are still opening new capacity with around 500,000 tonnes of additional plant coming on stream in November alone. The financial turbulence in Asia also continues unabated.

The industry may resolve its cyclical and structural problems over the longer term, but it still needs to weather the storms ahead in the next few months.



Source: SAGE

of paper and packaging – rose from \$380 a tonne in late 1993 to \$1,000 a tonne by the end of 1994, only to fall back to \$500 by the end of that year. Prices are now on their way up again, currently at just over \$600 a tonne.

This sort of volatility was the trigger behind the launch this year of two schemes for trading forward contracts for pulp.

The schemes, in Helsinki and London, see pulp futures as a way of helping producers, traders and buyers to hedge their financial risk and smooth out the ongoing peaks and troughs in profitability.

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Exchange – settlement is based on physical delivery.

For pulp industry watchers, the two schemes have brought one immediate benefit. They have resulted in publication for the first time of an authoritative market price for pulp.

Producers have in the past been secretive about disclosing their exact prices of the commodity. Many disclose their official list price, which has only a loose correlation with real market prices given by big customers.

But while the two exchanges have aided industry transparency, they have so far proved less than a roaring success. An average of just 10 to 20 contracts a day is traded in Helsinki. Anders Lindeberg, the exchange's president, admits trading is not continuous.

Moreover, the exchange has only one market-maker, Merita Bank, and just three active brokers. This is partly due to Finnish restrictions on domestic brokerages trading derivatives, but is nonetheless a considerable handicap to achieving a broad market.

Despite the fact that it

launched after the Helsinki scheme, Pulpex has proved more popular. Knut Lillehau, project manager, says an average of 70 to 80 contracts a day have been traded since the expiry of the first three-month future contract on September 17.

"We are aware that this is a long process, as it was in the oil industry when they introduced a future contract," Mr Lillehau says. "As long as we get new participants into the trading and they set up strategies, we feel we are going forward."

He says that Pulpex had 20 industrial participants in September and now has close to 40, although only three or four companies trade regularly. Of these, two are North American and one is Scandinavian.

Herein lies the nub of the challenge facing the two exchanges. While many companies have been happy to

test the water by making a few trades, none are as yet using pulp derivatives to hedge risk on a significant scale.

Ulla Nilsson, head of capital markets at Enskilda Futures in London – one of Pulpex's four market-makers – puts this down to the conservatism that pervades the executive boardrooms of pulp and paper companies internationally.

"It is a very conservative industry... many companies don't have treasury departments as such. Even if they do, the people there have to convince their management to grant approval to carry out trades," she says.

Advocates of forward contracts stress that they can be used not just by net producers of market pulp, but by companies that produce little pulp or are integrated producers (manufacturing pulp only for their own products) as part of managing volatility in prices of paper and packaging grades.

But the companies, it seems, remain unconvinced. The chief executive of one big European paper producer says: "For companies which are very dependent on pulp sales or purchases it might be useful, but we are self-sufficient in pulp and I don't think it will play an important role for us."

There is some way to go, it seems, before pulp derivatives graduate from interesting experiment to essential industry tool.

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTS • by Maggie Urry

Overcoming growing pains

Several countries are making strides in replanting and maintaining their forest lands

Everyone loves trees. And forests can provide an entirely renewable source of fibre to the pulp and paper industry. But history is full of examples of bad forest management, as growing populations use seemingly endless forests for shelter and fuel.

Now the forest industry is acutely aware of environmental issues, and sustainable forest management has become an important development. But the issue is increasingly controversial, as the industry is divided over different standards and certification systems. And there is the matter of cost.

In 1900, the US government became concerned about the country's forest resources. For years, America had exploited its forests to provide lumber for the country's economic expansion, says Michael Buckley, of the American Hardwood Association.

The government commissioned a survey of the nation's hardwood forests and found that at the rate trees were being cut, there would be few left by 1945. Since the trees took an average of 100 years to grow, the US forest service realised it would have to take action fast to avert a crisis by the middle of the century.

In 1945 another survey was undertaken. By then, the action taken early in the century had produced excellent results, and the second survey found the forests had in fact expanded since the first survey was taken.

Similarly, in Europe, the Swedish forests had been plundered for 200 years to supply the continent's timber needs. By the late 19th century, the shortage of for-

est had become increasingly acute, says Jan Remmrod, director general of the Swedish Forest Industries Association.

By the end of the last century, the first modern silviculture legislation had been enacted in Sweden. "This triggered a restoration of the Swedish forests, which in our history is called the first 'green movement,'" says Mr Remmrod. Since then, Sweden's timber stocks have roughly doubled.

Thus, the idea of managing forests to produce a sustainable yield of timber is nothing new, Mr Remmrod says: "Sustainable forest management today is far more than growing trees in a sustainable way. The challenge is to combine timber production and biodiversity - and I think this is fully possible."

In the late 1980s, environmentalists had become increasingly concerned about the effect forest products companies were having on the environment. Kathy Bradley, of the Paper Federation of Great Britain, says: "Every paper industry-related trade association was inundated with letters and enquiries from concerned consumers."

The industry was stung by the accusations, burlled against it, not only on forest management but over issues such as chlorine bleaching. Ms Bradley admits the industry initially responded badly. Now, she says, it has met the challenge.

Over the last 10 years, there have been significant moves towards meeting environmentalists' concerns. The 1987 Brundtland Commission on environment and development meant "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

A ministerial conference in Helsinki in 1993 on the

protection of European forests, defined sustainable forest management as "the stewardship and use of forests and lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regenerative capacity, vitality, and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels, and that does not do damage to other ecosystems".

Companies started to realise that there was a marketing advantage in describing their products as "environmentally friendly". However, such labels proliferated, and soon consumers began to mistrust them.

What was needed, many realised, was some system of certification to reassure consumers. In 1993, a group of environmentalists, indigenous peoples, and forest owners formed the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to attempt to harmonise the variety of forest product certification programmes around the world.

This non-governmental organisation, based in Mexico, has written a set of principles and guidelines, and began its certification programme last year.

According to Eleonore Schmidt, of the FSC, it operates the only independent "third party" certification scheme in the world. So far 400 hectares of forests worldwide have been awarded its accreditation mark.

The FSC accreditation system has been welcomed by retailers - such as B&Q, the UK do-it-yourself chain, and Home Depot, the US home improvement group. It gives them a simple way of reassuring their customers.

In Sweden, a number of leading forest companies, such as AssiDomän and SCA, agreed a national standard under the FSC guidelines and are beginning to have their forests certified.

A though forest owners must pay for certification, a cost which can range from 5 to 70 cents a hectare, depending on the type of forest and the difficulty of access for the inspectors, companies that have completed the process can achieve higher prices for their products.

But other companies and countries disagree with the FSC system. In Sweden, Södra, the co-operative of small private forest owners, withdrew from the Swedish FSC working party in May this year. Södra began working on its own certification stan-



The next generation: the industry was stung by accusations of a lack of interest in sustaining forests

Robert F. Bukaty/AP

dard, because it believes the FSC standards are not suitable for its small Swedish forests.

But it fears it will be at a disadvantage in the marketplace as retailers take up the FSC label.

Equally, the American Forest and Paper Association has set up its own standard, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, with which all its members must comply. The FSI regards such trade associations based schemes as second party and therefore not truly independent ones. In Canada, a forest ecosystem classification has been agreed, while the UK is close to finalising a

international Institute for Environment and Development, suggests that as the paper industry is global, it must have international standards. He believes many paper industries around the world have rejected the FSC accreditation because it has been put forward by environmentalists. But he argues, environmentalists "should have the grace to admit and support" the "terrific strides" countries such as Sweden have made towards sustainable forestry.

The industry must also be prepared to pay to achieve standards which satisfy buyers. Mr Remmrod says: "It is clear that the new forestry concepts cost more money." He estimates that "the new biodiversity preserving strategies will result in a reduction in the long-term harvest levels in those areas by at least 10 per cent".

"Swedish forestry has to accept those costs," says Mr Remmrod. "We need a credible verification system for forest management to guarantee that the people can use products made of paper and wood without worrying about destroying sensitive forest environments." Only then can consumers buy forest products "with a clear conscience".

INDUSTRY TRENDS • by Greg McIvor

Focus on individual core strengths for survival

To remain competitive, the sector is divesting non-essential activities

Big is beautiful in the eyes of the world's top forestry companies. The industry, for years deeply fragmented, is in the midst of a structural upheaval as companies seek to bolster their size to keep pace with an increasingly global customer base.

A wave of strategic deals which has swept across the sector this year, spanning Europe, North America and Asia, has been driven by two main considerations: a need to get closer to customers and growing pressure for greater sophistication and wider variety of products. The days when paper companies supplied a full portfolio of forestry products are fast receding. Where once individual paper mills were capable of producing a range of different paper or packaging grades, the trend now is for each to be strictly focused on a single product.

This trend can be seen in the new paper plants now being built. Enso of Finland recently opened a new mill in Oulu devoted entirely to producing 350,000 tonnes a year of coated wood-free magazine paper. Juha Niemelä, chief executive of UPM-Kymmene, Europe's largest forestry group, says: "Today's machines are custom-built. The wider the range of paper that they can produce, the more they cost and the less you can achieve the sophistication in areas which are important to you as a producer."

His company and other large producers are finding it no longer makes financial sense to offer a full palette of products at a time when customers are becoming more discerning about the qualities they want from a particular grade.

Take newspapers. A decade ago, most used roughly the same kind of newsprint. Any differences were generally explained by variations in machinery between different suppliers.

Today, a plethora of newsprint grades exists. The advent of colour has transformed the market, giving newspapers an opportunity to position their products in a way not possible before. For modern newspapers, the kind of newsprint they use is now a question of marketing, not technology. Hence their increasingly varied and specific tastes.

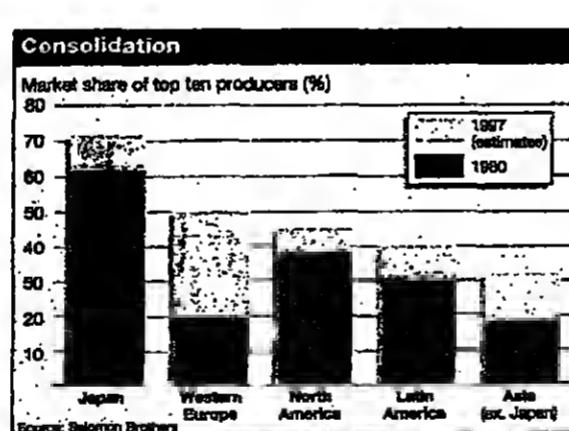
This trend is seen in the top management of paper companies. Traditionally, executives have come from an engineering background. But as the industry has moved from being production-driven to market-driven, the new breed of executives typically has marketing or business degrees.

As companies specialise their mills, so they are also paring back their operations to fewer sectors. The quest for economies of scale and the growing globalisation of the world paper industry are forcing leading groups to narrow their focus. "You have to be where your customers are," says Jukka Hurskainen, senior analyst at Arctic Securities in Helsinki. "In a dispersed industry like forestry that calls for consolidation."

Here, Scandinavia has led the way. The deep slump in the European pulp and paper market in the early 1990s forced Nordic producers to cut costs. Companies have since busied themselves divesting non-core operations and focusing on fewer segments.

This year, for instance, UPM-Kymmene withdrew from the packaging sector, selling its operations to Metso-Seria, the Finnish rival, in order to concentrate on just three grades: magazine paper (where it is world leader), fine paper and newsprint. Its compatriot Enso has also adopted a similar strategy, as has AssiDomän, the Swedish group, which has concentrated its operations heavily to packaging.

Others are following. KNP BT, the Dutch group, this year exited its paper businesses to focus on packaging and distribution. Apart from AssiDomän, the big Swedish



producers have lagged behind somewhat. But companies such as MoDo, Stora and SCA, which still operate across many sectors, are likely to follow the trends in order to retain long-term competitiveness.

Some analysts believe SCA is poised to focus more aggressively on its successful byylene products business and may scale back its involvement in printing and writing paper. North American producers, insulated by a vast domestic market, have been latecomers to this process. Yet globalisation of capital and markets is forcing producers there to put more emphasis on shareholder value. Consolidation is now starting to be seen.

Earlier this year Fletcher Challenge Canada embarked on a sale of non-core forest assets and sold its Blandin magazine paper operation to UPM-Kymmene. Others will probably move in a similar direction.



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4 WORLD PULP AND PAPER

EMERGING PRODUCERS South Africa

Rich parents cushion volatility

Using different techniques, both Sappi and Mondi are growing significantly

The South African pulp and paper industry has been spared much of the anguish brought about by the country's return to the global economy, in contrast with other sectors where manufacturers face new competition in the wake of a more liberal trade regime, tariff rates have always been relatively low and the industry remains competitive.

In spite of this strength, executives in other industries have had little cause to envy paper producers in recent years. The persistent volatility in global prices for pulp and paper has dogged the industry worldwide, and in particular Sappi, South Africa's biggest producer.

As prices plunged last year, Sappi was forced to halt production at many mills and despite improvements in 1997, the company passed its final dividend in the year to September.

Mondi, its smaller and more diversified rival, has been less exposed to the commodity cycle. An unlisted subsidiary within the Anglo American empire and thus out of bounds to investors seeking investment in forest products, it has been less closely scrutinised than Sappi. That may change if - as managers concede - Mondi's recent forays into international ventures culminate in an international listing.

Both Sappi and Mondi are well positioned to reap the benefits of firmer commodity prices in 1998. Pulp prices have risen from a low of \$380 a ton to about \$550 this year, and analysts expect the rising trend will continue, in the interim, both companies have chosen the fallow period to buy into new markets abroad.

Weak prices are not the only reason for the expansion. The dominant position of both groups in their key markets and the limited scope for expansion at home, has required international ventures. Although their strategies are radically different, both Sappi and Mondi are emerging from years of isolation to become significant global companies.

They have been helped by rich parents - the powerful industrial conglomerates that are a legacy of South Africa's siege economy.

Prior to being unbundled in 1993, Sappi was part of

Gencor, the mining and industrial group controlled by Sanlam, the country's second biggest life assured. Mondi is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Anglo American and De Beers. That pedigree, combined with robust cash flows from their local market, has enabled both groups to secure access to capital for acquisitions.

While local demand has slowed, the move offshore has highlighted the many pitfalls of the global industry.

The Anglo subsidiary has charted a different course abroad. In the best traditions of South Africa's biggest company, it has followed a course of diversification to reduce total exposure to commodity cycles. Its core products are pulp, newsprint, photocopy paper and paper packaging. Its international investments are all joint ventures with foreign partners who bring both technology and management skills to Mondi's operations.

During the past two years, Mondi has acquired a significant portfolio of foreign companies. Its most important buy was 12 per cent of Aracrus, the Brazilian group which was privatised last year and is the world's largest and lowest cost producer of bleached eucalyptus pulp. Mondi also holds 50 per cent of a joint venture with SCA of Sweden to build a newsprint machine at Alresford in the UK.

This year it has built on its European interests in Austria by investing about \$200m in eastern Europe through Anglo's international subsidiary, Mondi Minorco Paper. MMP recently acquired control of Swiecie, Poland's largest paper and packaging company, Dunajavro, the Hungarian pulp producer, and a 19 per cent stake in Syktyvkar of Russia.

By contrast with Sappi, where gearing on completion of the KNP Leykam deal is likely to be above 100 per cent, Mondi carries no debt at its centre. Although average gearing among its subsidiaries is 40 per cent, Mondi has used Anglo and its associates for funding.

The result is a labyrinthine ownership structure, which the group may have to unravel if it opts for a stock exchange listing. That issue is unlikely to be resolved if firm pulp prices prompt a surge in cashflows, but it could prove to be a significant factor in deciding the outcome of Anglo's search for a new corporate structure for the next century.

Mark Ashurst

The expansion aims to reduce volatility by increasing the influence of the largest producers over the market price. "You place bets and gamble because the fluctuations in the apparent demand are caused, not by the actual consumption of the product, but by positions

Sappi acquired superior technology with its purchase of KNP Leykam

in one of the most competitive segments in the paper industry, the purchase of the Dutch-Austrian paper group KNP Leykam by Sappi at an annual conference in Washington in October.

Analysts are divided over Sappi's prediction that consolidation will stabilise prices. Some doubt this strategy in the long term.

Others contrast Sappi's acquisitions with those of its local rivals.

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and quickly became the biggest paper producer in the Habsburg monarchy. After the destruction of the Second World War, only the Gratkorn plant remained operational. In 1961, Leykam acquired a stake in Mürzstaler, another paper mill in nearby Bruck and merged the two groups in 1974 to Leykam-Mürzstaler. The Bruck plant was sold just before the merger with the paper division of KNP BT in 1984.

At Gratkorn, the newest addition in the Triple Star project, the Paper Machine 11 went on-stream in October. It is the world's most productive apparatus of its kind, the company claims, with a width of 8.5 metres, a working speed of 1400 metres per minute, and annual capacity of 470,000 tons. It is designed to produce a paper weight of 115 to 200 grams per sq metre. The total length of the machine is 205 metres. The machine was built by Voith-Sulzer of Germany.

The Schöfisberg investment should make the Austrian plant the lowest-cost producer of wood-free coated paper in the world. Thanks to the new triple coated paper technology, KNP Leykam can also cut its input costs by using less fibres and more minerals to produce the same quality, explains Wolfgang Pfarrl, KNP Leykam's chairman. Even though the company is shutting down four older machines,

annual output is still set to rise by 250,000 tons to 720,000 tons, but the number of workers will be cut from 1,900 to 1,300.

Ironically, the new machine will exacerbate the biggest problem in the wood-free coated paper market - overcapacity. The global market, currently 11m tons, has grown by 7 per cent annually in recent years and is set to increase more than 10 per cent this year because of strong demand by advertisers for high-quality glossy sheets.

Wood-free coated paper is also used for art books, other glossy print products and labels.

Prices in this sector remain flat, however, as production capacity grows even faster than demand. Several new paper machines will start operating in East Asia soon, and Mr Pfarrl fears that the economic slump in the Pacific region will cause a part of this additional output to be directed to Europe.

The link up with Sappi should strengthen the market power of KNP Leykam, which has paper mills in Belgium and the Netherlands. In 1987, Leykam-Josephat was set up as a joint stock company

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its aims

JAPAN • by Paul Abrahams in Tokyo

Land of the sinking profits

There are few rays of hope for Japan's industry as the sun sets on record profits

Japan's paper companies are going through the shredder, and they have only themselves to blame. The cause is familiar: they have yet again invested heavily in new capacity and are now reaping the harvest in the form of plummeting prices and tumbling profits.

Almost all first-half results were down - and a far cry from the record profits achieved just two years ago. The markets have been unimpressed. They are predicting a gloomy future: the sector's shares are trading at a 10-year low.

It is true that weak levels, but the industry is

plagued by over-supply. In June, Nippon Paper brought on 240,000 tonnes a year of new coated paper capacity. Oji Paper has also just started another 240,000 tonnes a year coated paper machine, and Hokutsu is due to add a similar line for the same product next year. In high-grade paper, Mitsubishi added 120,000 tonnes a year in July. In all, says Jeff Sacknowitz, paper analyst at HSBC James Capel in Tokyo, the industry has added 15 per cent of new coated paper capacity - far ahead of demand, one part of the problem. The Japanese economy is stagnating at best and at worst is heading into recession. Daiwa Research Institute, admittedly among the most pessimistic among Japanese forecasters, predicts the country's gross domestic product will contract 0.5 per cent in the year to March. Overall demand for paper continues to grow - reflecting increasing use of personal computers in Japan. But this is expanding at just 3 per cent, far slower than expected, according to Simone Cumlife, paper analyst at Jardine Fleming. Demand for some grades is weak, particularly for corrugated board and sheet paper. Unsurprisingly, inventories are unusually high.

Shipments are at record

levels during that period sheet paper prices fell 5.4 per cent, packaging materials 1.5 per cent and paperboard 2.2 per cent. Prices for hygiene paper - typically tissues - are at a 10-year low.

There were hopes that pricing discipline could be instilled after September, but prospects are poor. Some grades' prices are slipping, even though October and November are traditionally high-demand months. "The full effect will become apparent this month and in January," says Mr Sacknowitz.

Oji Paper has been limiting its production increases, but with a new machine coming on-line, they are unlikely to hold back."

It was not supposed to be this way. The industry has rationalised heavily in recent years and should

have been able to control prices. Since 1993, three big companies have disappeared following mergers. In 1993, Jujo Paper and Sanyo-Kokusaku Pulp merged to form Nippon Paper, Japan's second largest paper group by sales. In the same year, Oji Paper merged with Kanzaki Paper to form the country's biggest paper manufacturer. Then last year, New Oji merged with Honshu Paper to create Oji Paper.

In some respects the increasingly oligarchical structure has helped. During the last upturn, the industry added 4m tonnes a year of capacity. This cycle, the additions have been limited to just 2m tonnes. Even so, this is clearly still too much.

Moreover, the other benefits of the mergers - in terms of cost-savings - have not really come through

and pulp is imported and is therefore dollar denominated. Analysis estimate that up to half of all Japanese paper companies' raw material costs are denominated in dollars. Last year the dollar was valued on average at Y113. This year, so far the average is Y122 and deteriorating. Mr Sacknowitz estimates that for each yen the dollar appreciates, about Y560m is knocked off the profits of leading paper companies.

A likely reason for low-import penetration is that the paper makers often hold substantial shareholdings in the wholesalers, and this makes it extremely difficult for overseas importers to make headway. Indonesian manufacturers have set up a sales office in Japan, but progress has been slow. How long this can continue is moot: the US, in particular, is showing increasing irritation at the low level of import penetration after a three-year agreement ending in April failed to meet its targets.

What is certain is that the Asian currency crisis will hurt Japanese exports. This will exacerbate the problem of domestic overcapacity. With weak demand likely to continue, and pricing power in Japan, because of lower electricity and labour costs and

EMERGING PRODUCERS Indonesia

Survival of the cheapest

The Indonesian sector should weather the crisis as operating costs plummet

Indonesia's pulp and paper industry, already one of the world's most competitive, is likely to be one of very few sectors to emerge from the country's current economic crisis stronger and more competitive. Its rapid expansion has left heavy debts in the midst of low prices and growing competition for Indonesian timber.

Brett Hutton, chief financial officer at Asia Pacific Resources International (April), the pulp producer, predicted that the sharp depreciation of the Rupiah - by more than 30 per cent in recent months - would bring a net 10 to 15 per cent reduction in operating cost. April's pulp production cost stood at \$207 per tonne before the depreciation.

"Sixty per cent of our cost is Rupiah-based," Mr Hutton

says. "Approximately half of the cost is wood. The principal part of the wood cost is labour."

Before the Rupiah dropped, the cost of Indonesian wood ranged from \$90 to \$110 per tonne, compared to \$120-\$150 in North America, \$100 to \$90 in Europe and \$100 to \$110 in Brazil. This cost advantage had allowed Indonesia to expand rapidly, both in pulp production and further into paper products. Production of paper-grade wood pulp in Indonesia rose by 14.7 per cent in 1996 and production capacity reached 2.75m tonnes. More pulp and paper mills came on-line this year, and Barito Pacific, a leading timber company, has obtained financing for yet another pulp mill.

Indonesia's producers are well located, as all of its neighbours are net importers. Demand in the region is growing faster than elsewhere. Before the currency crisis hit, industry analysts said demand in Asia would exceed supply by 10.9m

tonnes of pulp and 12.4m tonnes of paper by 2012. Indonesia exported \$573m worth of pulp and paper in the first five months of 1997, compared to \$554m in 1996.

But Mr Hutton maintains that Indonesian paper can undercut its competitors as far as southern Europe, because producers can profit from low shipping fees, as ships tend to export more to south-east Asia than back and need cargo to pay for the trip home.

And it has a domestic market of 200m people who are only beginning to consume paper products. "Our consumption of paper right now is only 17 kilos per capita," says Suharsono Kramadibrata, president director of the new Kiani Kertas pulp mill. "The potential market is really big."

April, part of Raja Garuda Mas Group, plans a 30 per cent share swap with UPM-Kymmene to market office paper in Europe and expand jointly in Asia. Its largest competitor, Asia Pulp & Paper, part of Sinar Mas

Group, has teamed up with Itochu with an ambitious target of \$800m in annual exports to Japan, one-third of its expected total exports this year.

April and APP have both moved into China, and APP has also set up plantations and pulp and paper plants in India and Malaysia. April is about to open a paper mill to become less dependent on pulp prices; APP plans to use all of its pulp in new and existing paper mills by the year 1999 and expand into stationery, which is less price sensitive than unprinted paper.

High debt, however, has left Indonesia's producers vulnerable to the roller coaster ride in prices in recent years. Indonesia's pulp and paper plants were badly affected by the sharp slump in prices in 1996 as many were new and had yet to pay off start-up loans.

April reported a net loss of \$76.4m for 1996 and \$8.8m for the first half of 1997. April faces \$1.8bn in consolidated debt, with plans to spend

another \$1.2bn on expansion by the end of 1998. But both April and APP insist that their debts are long-term and protected from the depreciation as the balance sheets are in dollars.

Kiani Kertas, a pulp mill of the Kalimantan Group which opened in August, was hard pressed to obtain \$975m in financing in the midst of last year's pricing slump. It borrowed \$10m in Rupiah at high interest rates, \$120m offshore and says it obtained the remain-

der from "intra-group lending". President Subarto offered the company, owned by his golf partner, a Rp250bn loan out of the country's reforestation fund after many off-shore lenders declined. Suharsono Kramadibrata says his mill will need a pulp price of at least \$500 to break even. "It's a matter of luck," he says.

Indonesia has been widely criticised for plundering its forests for the timber industry and, more recently, pulp and paper. Local environmental groups such as Walhi have also protested against chlorine gas emissions and discharges into the rivers from pulp and paper mills.

Maya Sarab, a leading member of Walhi, says the smaller pulp and paper mills, which use bamboo and bushes as raw material, tend to be the most active polluters because they cannot afford water treatment facilities. But she adds that river pollution data indicates that production at some larger plants is not halted when water treatment plants are shut down for repairs.

Walhi and others have also criticised pulp and paper mills for buying timber that is felled illegally by locals. Mr Hutton concedes that this happens in some factories.

April used to source 20 per cent of its timber outside its concessions but is now 98 per cent self-supporting, he said.

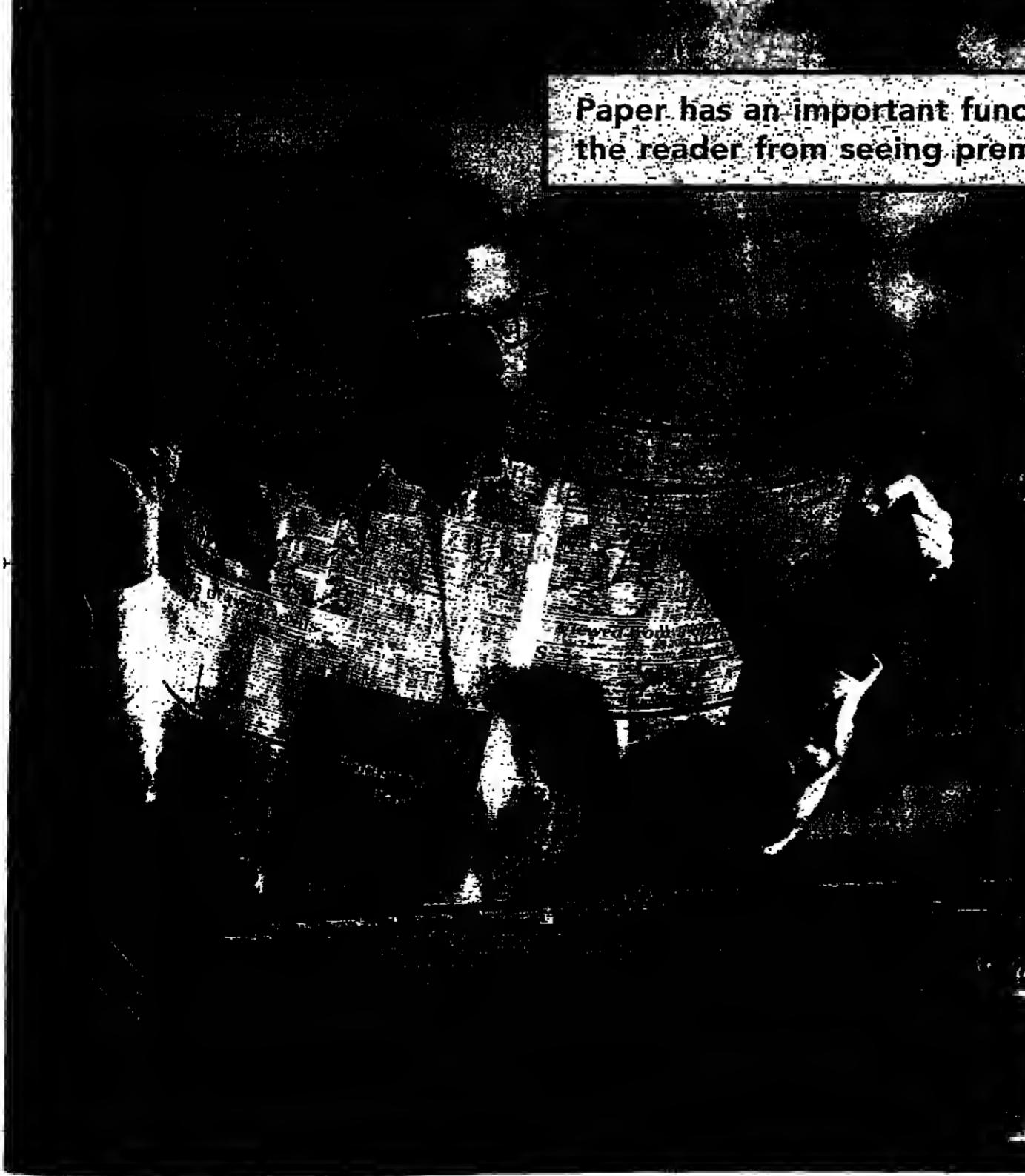
The massive forest, bush and peat bog fires that hit much of Indonesia this year have highlighted the risk of rushed development. Most large pulp and paper industries reported marginal damage to their plantations.

Sander Thoenes



This year's fires show the risks of rushed development Jonathan Head

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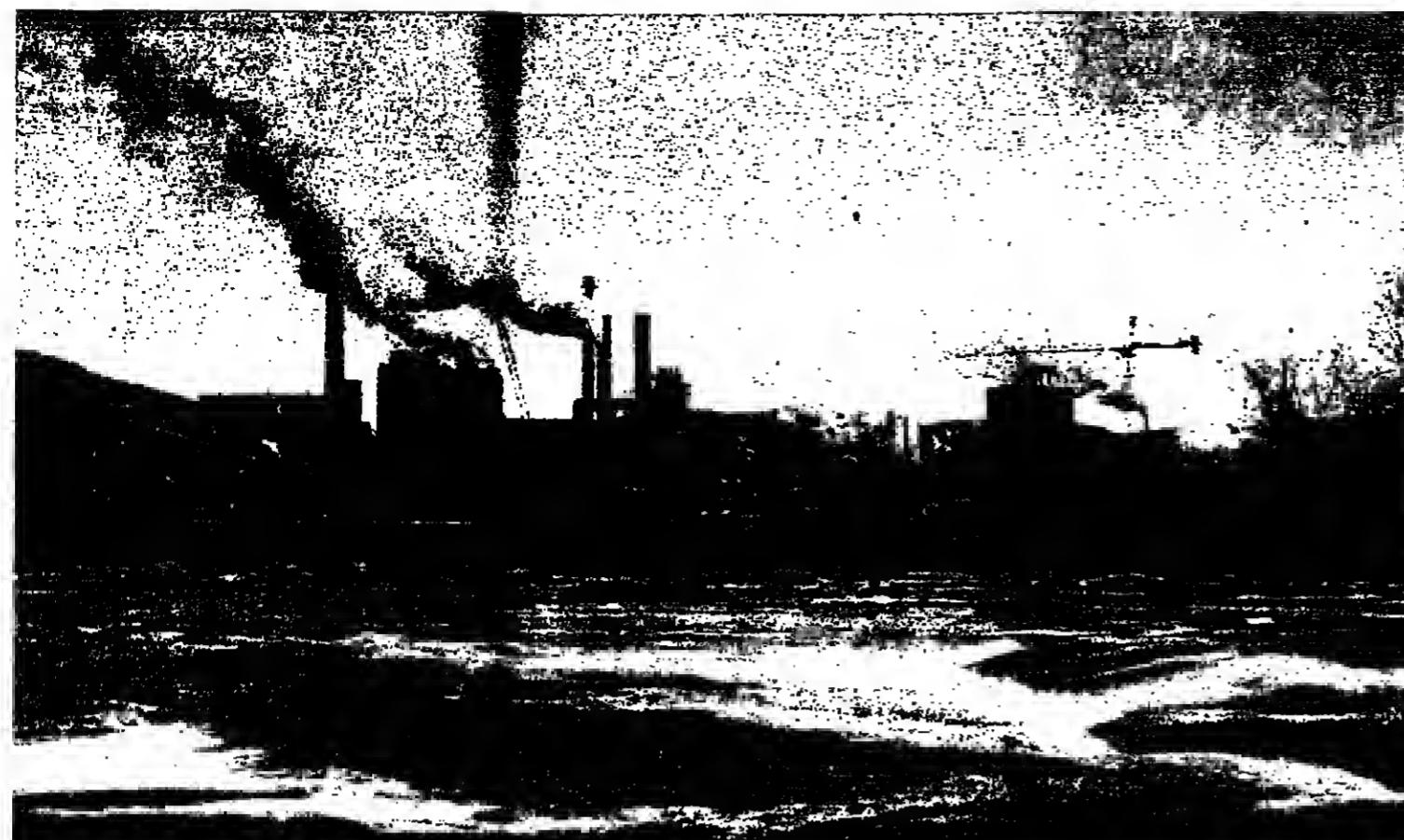


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IF YOU DON'T NEED PAPER, CHECK YOUR PULSE.

6 WORLD PULP AND PAPER



Leading the way: in 1995 Scott Paper Company acquired Kimberly-Clark Corporation for stock valued at \$6.8bn. When Albert J. Dunlop, chairman and CEO of Scott Paper Company (above left), completed the agreement with Wayne R. Sander (above right), chairman and CEO of Kimberly-Clark Corporation, they encouraged greater consolidation throughout the pulp and paper industry worldwide. Mergers could change the business landscape for local operations like this Boise Cascade mill in Maine (left). Like many other North American companies, Boise Cascade is reviewing its future options, but it seems likely that it too will move towards consolidation.

NORTH AMERICA • by Scott Morrison in Toronto

New calls for sector consolidation

The Asian fiscal crisis caught the fragmented North Americans off guard

Having suffered through a difficult 18 months, the North American pulp and paper industry was, until recently, optimistic about the outlook continuing to improve. Prices were rising and demand, fuelled by strong economies in the US and Canada, was growing.

But the industry will likely have to wait a little longer, as the Asian financial crisis has resulted in a reduction in demand for pulp, paper and board in that region. Observers are not yet sure exactly how the industry will be affected by the problems in the Asia Pacific region, an area which accounted for almost one-

third of global paper and board consumption in 1996. The situation grew more serious for pulp exporters when South Korea, one of the world's largest pulp importers, was caught up in the crisis.

Optimistic forecasts suggest the outlook for North American pulp and paper producers will not improve until the third quarter of 1998, although analysts were still waiting to see how the situation develops in Japan and China, the world's second and third largest paper and board consumers.

However events unfold, the short-term outlook for the North American industry is bleak. Devalued currencies will cut Asian demand for paper and board, while pulp exporters have already reported a drop in demand, as much as 50 per cent in some cases, from Asian clients. Devalued cur-

rencies will also make Asian producers of pulp, free sheet and newsprint much more of a competitive threat to US and Canadian producers.

The Asian crisis comes as the highly fragmented North American pulp and paper industry is already facing increasing competition from low cost producers in the southern hemisphere and Finnish companies recently strengthened by consolidation. These trends have put pressure on US and Canadian firms to streamline and consolidate to achieve economies of scale and reduce distribution costs.

Abitibi-Consolidated, which became the world's largest newsprint producer after Abitibi-Price merged with Stone-Consolidated earlier this year, expects to save \$100m because of the deal. Domtar, the Canadian forest products company, in October announced it would

merge its packaging division with Cascades' container board operations to form a joint venture that would benefit from the two companies' strengths, which include the geographic location of mills and mix of products. Fletcher Challenge Canada sold its US coated paper facility in September and has announced it will bolster its presence in newspaper and groundwood specialty papers.

More mergers and acquisitions are widely expected in 1998 as companies move to shed non-core assets. Fletcher Challenge is now eyeing paper mills owned by Macmillan Bloedel, Jefferson Smurfit, Champion International and Weyerhaeuser. Harmac Pacific intends to purchase two mills owned by Kimberley-Clark, the US consumer products company, for US\$40m. The sale, most likely to take place in Febru-

ary if Harmac is able to raise the capital through equity, will establish the company as Canada's leading pulp and uncoated fine papers were also expected to increase next year, but not as much as initially forecast. Liner board prices were still seen to increase significantly next year.

"It turns out to be a bit of a lost year with respect to commodity prices," said Francois Loo, forest products analyst with SBC Warburg Dillon Read. Consolidation, however, is only part of the solution to the North American industry's woes.

The pressure on US and Canadian companies has increased as the drop in Asian demand will keep prices from rebounding to expected levels. Producers in late 1997 tried unsuccessfully to raise northern bleached softwood kraft pulp prices from US\$610 per tonne to US\$650. Instead, analysts forecast the price will fall to US\$630 by March 1998 due to the Asian turmoil.

Paper products prices have been revised downward as well. Newsprint, which has been in high demand in 1997, had been expected to average US\$660 per tonne in 1998, up from an average of US\$650 this year. But more recent estimates suggest

newsprint will average about US\$625 throughout the upcoming year. Coated and uncoated fine papers were also expected to increase next year, but not as much as initially forecast. Liner board prices were still seen to increase significantly next year.

"They need to do what the industry has done," said one industry analyst, referring to the recent wave of Scandinavian consolidation.

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"Any effort to improve pricing will be temporary without addressing overcapacity," said Sherman Chao, an analyst with Merrill Lynch in New York. The problem is bound to get worse due to a building spree by southern hemisphere pulp and paper producers that will add significant new capacity to

world markets in 1998.

The overcapacity problem has been aggravated by strong unions in Canada and provincial governments in British Columbia and Quebec that keep all mills alive. In a recent bid to save jobs, the British Columbia government spent C\$211m to buy 52 per cent of Skeena Cellulose, formerly Repap BC. Analysts say about 425,000 pounds of pulp could have been removed from the market had the province allowed the financially troubled mill to fail.

There are signs, however,

that US and Canadian producers are beginning to address the issue. Despite the Asian and Latin American expansion, North American producers have refrained from launching significant expansion initiatives.

Some suggest the industry ought to take a more proactive approach to the problem by closing high cost production facilities or scaling back production at operating mills, strategies that companies have been reluctant to adopt given the capital intensive nature of the industry.

"They are not as quick in shutting down capacity as they should be," said Chip Dillon, an analyst with Salomon, Smith, Barney. But corporate leaders have indicated they are more aware of

the need to more effectively manage production and inventory levels. While economies of scale might suffer from the reduction of output at specific mills, the industry as a whole would benefit from stronger, more stable prices. Weyerhaeuser has scheduled downturns that will take about 50,000 pounds of pulp out of the global market during the next three months, while Georgia Pacific and Stone Container have also recently announced production cutbacks.

Many of the challenges the industry must contend with are largely of its own making. The older generation of North American pulp and paper executives are seen as too conservative to adapt to the rapidly changing marketplace.

Prompted by shareholders disgruntled by inadequate returns, a new generation of corporate leaders with financial, rather than engineering, backgrounds are slowly reforming companies that have for too long focused on market share rather than on rates of return. While low cost competitors in the southern hemisphere pose a threat to North American pulp and paper producers, US and Canadian firms must face up to the challenges by first putting their own operations in order.

Forest products expertise



UPM-Kymmene has played an active role in the paper industry's consolidation and globalization to be able to respond better to the challenges of the future. Most recently, the company has entered into a strategic alliance in the fine paper business with an Asian partner, and acquired a US magazine paper supplier. These steps provide UPM-Kymmene with greater opportunities for global growth.

UPM-Kymmene is one of the world's largest forest industry companies and the biggest in Europe. Its success is based on customer service, a wide product range, R&D, modern production technology and cost-effectiveness.

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EMERGING PRODUCERS Brazil

Brazil to face difficulties navigating stormy 1998

Only the cash-rich will sail smoothly through coming economic downturn

Next year is likely to be a tough one for Brazil's paper and pulp industry, especially for the majority of its 220 odd companies dependent on the domestic market. Only cash-rich companies protected from the prospect of near-zero growth in the Brazilian economy – either through exports or by supplying strong niche markets – will fare better.

In the longer term, however, Brazilian producers are well placed to take advantage of a growing market at home and of a strong competitive edge on export markets.

While the industry is dominated by a handful of big companies, only one or two have the scale to compete internationally. Consolidation is widely predicted, along with the entry of new foreign companies.

Brazilian producers enjoy several natural advantages. A tropical climate, fertile soils and abundant land and labour results in some of the lowest costs for wood worldwide. Eucalyptus trees reach maturity in just seven years, producing 45 cubic metres of hardwood per hectare per year, more than double the output of Brazil's nearest competitors. Softwood pines grown in the south are also among the highest yielding in the world.

Brazil is the world's seventh largest pulp producer, its 12th biggest paper producer and 10th biggest paper

consumer. While it is a net exporter of paper products, most producers are dedicated to supplying the domestic market.

This will make them particularly exposed to a slowdown in economic activity expected next year, the result of a government austerity package introduced to defend Brazil's currency due to the turmoil that took grip of global capital markets at the end of October.

The package included a doubling of the central bank's basic interest rate to more than 40 per cent a year, dealing a double blow to those producers carrying domestic debt.

The industry has an average debt-to-equity ratio of 45 per cent – low by international standards, but expensive here.

The company ideally placed to ride out the domestic downturn is Aracruz, the world's biggest producer of bleached hardwood kraft pulp.

It sells 95 per cent of its output overseas. While these markets are also likely to slow down in the first quarter, demand can be expected to recover later in the year.

Aracruz has the further advantage of holding the equivalent of about \$700m in cash, so it will benefit from higher interest rates.

Votorantim Celulosa e Papel (VCP), part of Brazil's biggest family-owned conglomerate, will suffer less than others in the sector from high interest payments because its debt-to-equity ratio is low, about 14 per cent. A recent increase in pulp capacity should allow it to benefit from exporting.

Paulo Vasconcellos, an analyst at ING Barings in São Paulo, says exports as a share of total sales should rise from 34 per cent this year to 49 per cent in 1998.

Following investments of \$66m this year, VCP is well placed to tap Brazil's market for higher added value coated papers. While domestic consumption of papers grew just 0.5 per cent in the first three quarters, from 668,700 tons in 1996 to 672,300 tons this year, consumption of coated papers grew by 71.7 per cent from 106,100 tons to 185,600 tons, according to company figures.

Growth in this market has been driven by the success of magazine and book publishing over the past three years, and by increasing use by marketers of direct mail.

Other leading companies face a rougher time ahead, at least in the medium term. Klebin, Latin America's biggest integrated manufacturer of paper products, sells about 80 per cent of its output at home and has a high debt-to-equity ratio.

Suzano, the second biggest paper and pulp maker in the region, is even more dependent on the domestic market, selling only about 4 per cent of production as exports. Short-term earnings should suffer further from its 55 per cent stake in Bahia Sul, an advanced and low-cost pulp and paper producer it operates in a joint venture with Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD), which has debts of about \$1bn.

Assuming the economy recovers towards the third quarter of next year, the industry's next priority will be consolidation so it can compete in global markets.

Increasingly, this means competing both at home and

abroad. Several foreign companies are active in Brazil through subsidiaries or minority holdings. The most recent entrant is Stora of Sweden, which formed a joint venture with Odebrecht, a Brazilian conglomerate with interests in construction, petrochemicals and forestry. The partners plan to invest \$1.5bn in a pulp operation in the northeastern state of Bahia, which is expected to produce 750,000 tons a year. Stora intends to use the pulp for its own plants in Europe, and in south-east Asia.

Consolidation among producers has been expected for some time, but little progress has been made. This year, CVRD was privatised. Its buyer is a consortium led by CSN, a steel maker. Observers expected the company to sell its paper and pulp assets to concentrate on its core activities in iron ore mining. This has not happened, and CVRD seems intent on becoming a global paper and pulp producer. As well as owning its own forests and its interest in Bahia Sul, CVRD is a joint venture partner with a group of Japanese companies in Cenibra, Brazil's 11th biggest pulp producer. There are natural synergies between CVRD's operations and those of Aracruz. Talks took place but neither side wants to give up control.

Says Mr Vasconcellos at ING Barings: "The difficulty [with consolidation] is that almost all Brazilian companies are family owned, so everyone wants to buy and nobody wants to sell."

Jonathan Wheatley